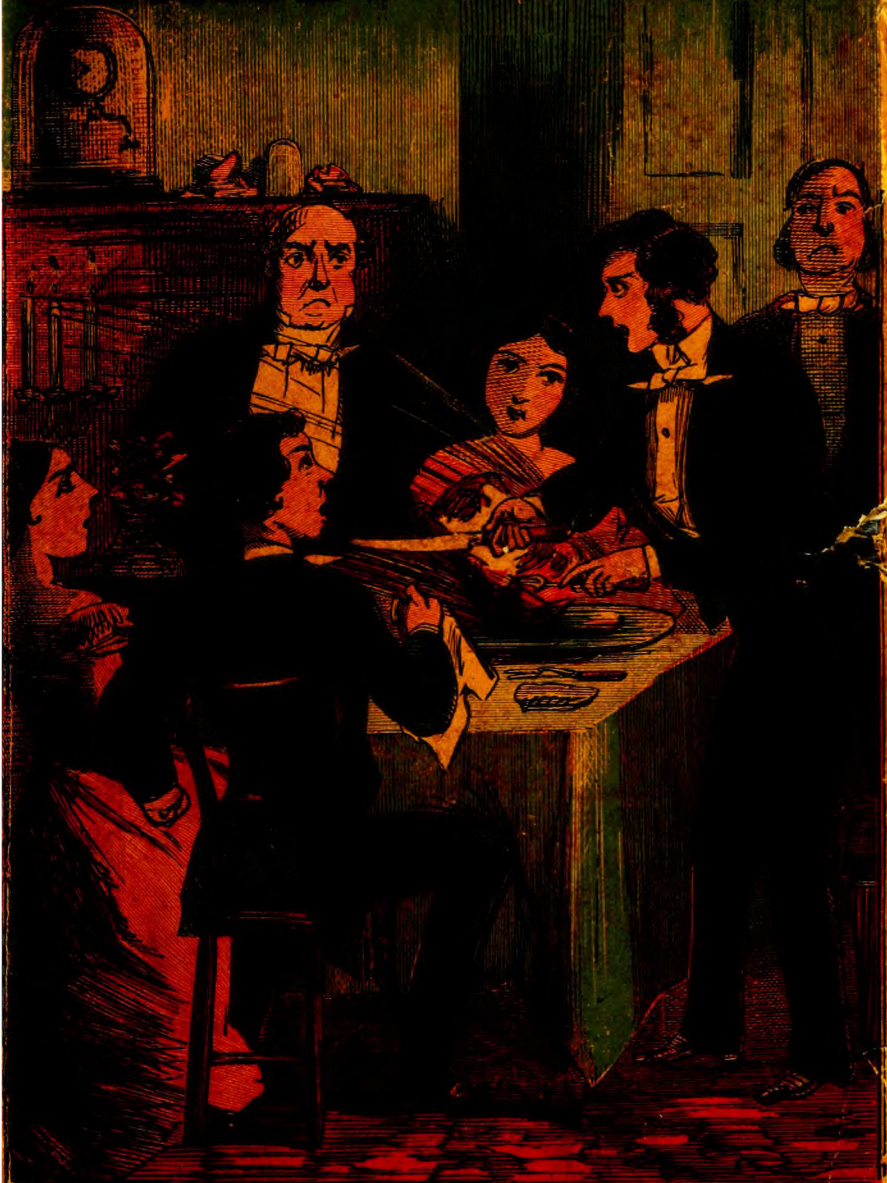


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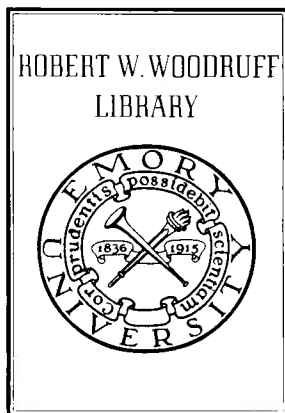
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A SEQUEL TO

GILBERT GURNEY.

BY

THEODORE HOOK,

AUTHOR OF

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LONDON:

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GURNEY MARRIED.

CHAPTER I.

THE first part of the late Mr. Gurney's memoirs having been very favourably received by the public, I have been induced to continue my search amongst his manuscripts, in order to afford its readers some further information connected with the annals of his family.

It may be recollected that the concluding words of the first portion of his papers are, "WE WERE MARRIED;" which words refer to his union with Harriet, eldest daughter of the Reverend Richard Wells, Rector of Blissford in the county of Hants. After this event Mr. Gilbert Gurney, as every man when he marries should do, turned over a new leaf—in his common-place book; and I find a hiatus, "*valdé deflendus*," of nearly two months, in his memoranda. Love, I presume, left him no leisure for literature; at least there is nothing discoverable in the way of detail, affecting either the celebration of his wedding, or the subsequent excursion which fashionable delicacy appears to have rendered indispensable upon such occasions; and the first resumption of his notes occurs on the first day of the year succeeding that in which he became a Beneſict: and thus he writes:—

I begin a new year in a new character—I am now a married man. "Marriage," says Johnson, "is the strictest tie of perpetual friendship, and there can be no friendship without confidence, and no confidence without integrity;

and he must expect to be wretched who pays to beauty, riches, and politeness, that regard which only virtue and piety can claim." Johnson was right.

Cuthbert's munificence has enabled me to establish myself in perfect comfort. He has made one stipulation—he desires to make our house his home; and when the young Falwassers, his wife's children, have their school vacations, they are also to pass their Christmas and Midsummer holidays here. This is all right and pleasant—a combination not very common in the affairs of this world. Cuthbert has an apartment of two rooms, consisting of a study and bed-chamber, allotted to him, both opening into Harriet's flower-garden on the south side of the house; for his long residence in India has rendered him extremely sensitive, as far as our capricious climate is concerned. Fanny Wells is staying with my wife, to whom she was always an affectionate sister; and we are all as happy as we could wish, and perhaps even happier than we deserve to be. I could feel myself snatched from the follies and frivolities of an idle vagabond life, and placed by Providence in a haven of security, where nothing but quietude and comfort are to be found.

There was certainly something remarkably odd in the way in which I was inveigled into matrimony. My father-in-law's conduct might, in many other cases, have been attributed to interested motives, and his eagerness to conclude a matrimonial treaty between his daughter and myself, might have been put to the account of his anxiety to get her off his hands, and settle her advantageously in the world; but that cannot be thought or imagined. the moment the smallness of my income is taken into consideration. What startles me most, and most powerfully excites my gratitude to Providence is, that circumstances should have occurred not only to prevent distress and uneasiness, and perhaps worse calamities, in my wife's family, and not only to rescue us from the necessity of undertaking a voyage to India, but to place us in a state of such agreeable competency as that in which we now find ourselves.

When Cuthbert first established himself at Ashmead—a somewhat pastoral "name" for my first "local habitation"

—I was very much surprised at his absolute helplessness. His servant is qui-hi'd into his room every five minutes. Lighting a taper or sealing a letter appears to be an Herculean task to him, and the listlessness which pervades the conduct of his life, manifests itself so strongly when we are at breakfast or at dinner, that I am sure if, amongst the innumerable classes of domestics with which India abounds, there were such an officer as an Eatabader to be had, Cuthbert would have him at any price. When we first met at Gosport, he was so evidently labouring under the effects of bad health and depression of spirits, that I could quite understand this abasement of animal exertion; and before I knew how nearly we were connected, I felt the deepest sympathy for his unhappy case. Now *that* feeling is changed into wonder and astonishment, that a being who, by what he calls his own exertions, has contrived to realize a handsome fortune, should seem to possess no power of exerting himself upon any occasion whatever. His health is good, his spirits are recovering rapidly, but his torpor continues. He is, I find, like our friend Nubley, afflicted with occasional fits of absence. I am afraid, if Harriet were to speak truth, she and her sister Fanny would not break their hearts if the fit were permanent. He crawls or is wheeled out of his own rooms every day about noon, and seats himself in the drawing-room, in order, as he says, to amuse the ladies and the visitors who chance to call; and the ladies are forced to remain where they are in order to amuse *him*. He talks to everybody with whom he meets, as if he had known them all his life; and I cannot conceal the fact from myself, that he talks about nothing in the world, let him talk as long as he may.

Wells rather enjoys his peculiarities, and Nubley listens to him with the deepest interest. In short, strange as it may seem, I believe Cuthbert's anxiety that I should take this house was mainly attributable to his desire to be near his old friend and former partner. To Harriet, of course remaining in the neighbourhood of her father and mother is extremely agreeable; but I see that poor dear Cuthbert, with all his kindnesses, conferred as they are in the oddest manner, is a

bit of a bore to the ladies of the circle. Harriet, disliking the formality of calling him brother-in-law,—which on account of the differences in our ages, she does not approve,—and not venturing to address him as Cuthbert, has transformed him into a cousin, and “cousin” she always calls him. I heard Wells, after she had once used this endearing appellation, say to her, loud enough for me to hear it, “Harriet, don’t you wish he was a cousin once removed?” This naturally worries me. I am one of those few people in the world who see the faults and imperfections of my nearest relations and connexions, perhaps even more plainly than others; and I often wonder to myself, when I hear fathers extolling the eminent powers and abilities of their children, husbands puffing off the talents of their wives, wives speaking of the prodigious merits of their husbands, and whole families swearing to the excellence of everything said or done by any individual member of them. Probably if the late Mrs. Cuthbert were alive, we should hear her talking of the beautiful serenity of her husband’s mind—such a quiet gentlemanly man—or quoting him in comparison with somebody else, as a superior creature. Now, I can see, and can hear; and it is not because of our near connexion that I can shut my eyes to his failings.

One day I had been over to the Rectory to see Wells; and on my return I found Cuthbert, as usual, extended at full length on a sofa by the drawing-room fire. Harriet and Fanny were working, and Mrs. Wells, who had come over to see them, was sitting, playing company, the family party having been increased by the arrival of Lieutenant Merman, whose name I have had occasion to mention before, and who, I really think, is caught by the bright eyes of my sister-in-law Fanny. Whether Wells is of the same opinion I cannot say, nor can I rightly calculate when the toddy-making season is likely to set in. He is a very constant visitor at Ashmead, or, at least, *has* been, since Fanny has been with us.

Contrary to my usual habit, for I contrive to make myself occupation of various sorts during the morning, I joined the little circle.

"Well, Gilbert," said my brother, stretching his limbs to their fullest extent, as if to wake himself, "have you been out?"

"Yes, to the parsonage," said I.

"Ah!" replied Cuthbert, "very cold, isn't it? Harriet, dear, just ring the bell—thanks—we have been very comfortable."

"I thought," said I, "you proposed a walk yourself."

"Yes," said Cuthbert, "I did—I had my great coat put on and my shawl wrapper—and meant to call on Mrs. Nubley—but I met him—and I asked him if Mrs. Nubley was at home, and he said "No:" so I—I came back again—Ah!" Here a servant entered the room, responsive to the bell.

"Oh!" said Cuthbert, "tell Hutton to bring me a pocket-handkerchief." The man retired. "So I came back again—because I knew it must be dull for the ladies to be left alone—and here, thanks to them, I am quite at my ease, and having nothing on earth to do, I cannot do better than show my gratitude to them. Fanny, dear, give me that eau de Cologne—Ah!"

"I am sure, Mr. Gurney," said Mrs. Wells, "the girls ought to be greatly obliged to you."

"I think they are," said Cuthbert. "A man who has been abroad so long as I have, has always something to communicate which is interesting. Oh, Hutton, get me my seal-ring. Harriet, love, I will beg you to seal that letter, which I got Nubley to write for me, about those air cushions. Capital invention that, Mrs. Wells."

"Very good, indeed," replied the lady.

"Ah!" said Cuthbert, "but what was I saying when Gilbert came in? Oh!—I wish somebody would recollect for me—it was——"

"About the horses running away with the post-chaise," said Lieutenant Merman, who had not heard the story fifty times before, which the rest of the present company had.

"Ah!" said Cuthbert—"so it was—it is one of the earliest events of my life that I can remember: you weren't

born or thought of, Gilbert, then. I forget if I ever told you—”

“What,” said I, “on Shooter’s Hill?”

“Yes,” replied Cuthbert, “that place beyond Blackheath, where there’s the model of Severndroog—I shall never forget it, my poor father was with me. Something by the road-side frightened the off-horse, and away we went—down the hill at full speed—set the other horse off with him, and we thought—hey dear!—thought we should be dashed to pieces.”

“And how did you escape, sir,” said the lieutenant.

“Oh!” replied Cuthbert, “when they got to the bottom of the hill the horses stopped of themselves—Ah!” I perceived that Cuthbert—having sent for his handkerchief, bathed his temples with the eau de Cologne, and begged me to stir the fire, and place the sofa cushions conveniently for his repose—was a fixture for the rest of the day; and as the story I did wait to hear was only the first of a series which he was in the habit of telling as regularly as the “Friar of Orders Grey” told his beads, I left the assembly, not without receiving a look from Harriet, too distinctly expressive of her feelings to be misunderstood.

I have merely noted these few trifling facts, because I very much fear that the total want of sympathy, which unfortunately exists between Cuthbert and all those with whom he must constantly associate while staying here, will some day exhibit itself in a positive and unequivocal manner. What is to happen when the three Falwassers come from school, I do not even venture to premise. They have never had the advantage of maternal care; and from the extremely undefined character of Cuthbert’s conversation and remarks touching them, I have not been able to form any just estimate of their character or qualities. Somehow I begin to think the scheme of admitting any relation, however near, as a constant resident in the establishment of a married couple, is at best but hazardous. Yet in *my* case it has been inevitable; but for Cuthbert I should not have had the house in which he desires to be an inmate. Besides, he wants cherishing; a man at his time of life, returned to a

country the manners and habits of which are totally different from those of the distant empire in which he has passed the prime of his life. would be lost if left to himself. Friends he has few, relations none, except myself; and if ever a momentary doubt of the entire success of our *ménage* at Ashmead does cross my mind, it is speedily dismissed by the recollection of how much I owe him, and how essential my attention to his wishes is to his comfort.

There were many points in Cuthbert's history upon which I should very much have liked to be enlightened; but my hopes and expectations were vain. All the important features of his past life seemed either to be studiously concealed from my sight, or to have escaped his own recollection. His random records consisted of nothing but frivolous anecdotes which appeared to float to and fro upon the surface of his mind, while the serious facts had sunk altogether "out of soundings." I admit that I began to find Wells and his wife, and two or three other friends, getting fidgetty, and evincing much of dislike to be so overlaid—if I may use the expression—with poor Cuthbert,—who having, fortunately for himself, evinced a passion for chess, discovered that Mr. Sniggs, the apothecary, could place the pieces for him, and make the ordinary moves against him, suggested to the said Sniggs that he should be delighted to see him whenever his professional occupations permitted, and that there was always luncheon at half-past one, and so on.

This was quite right. Why should not Cuthbert like chess? Why should not he ask Sniggs? No reason why—except that Mrs. Wells always thought that the flower of her flock, Adelgitha, lost her life through want of skill on the part of this very Sniggs: and they were consequently the bitterest foes—Cuthbert and Sniggs the dearest friends. Sniggs not only played chess with him, and put the men all ready before they began, but having prescribed a sort of mawkish drink—a kind of sickly negus, powdered with "Mareschalle" nutmeg—compounded it for his friend, patient, and antagonist, and administered it *secundum artem*. Sniggs literally did that which many men, and even their observations, are said to do—he "smelt of the shop;" and

when the atmosphere was heavy and the "scent lay," his entrance into the drawing-room, where Cuthbert, for the sake of making himself amiable, *would* sit, was the signal for the departure and dispersion of the little family coterie, —who were up like a covey of partridges on his arrival; alleging as a reason, that they were quite sure they should disturb the chess-players if they staid. Sniggs was a character—in his way; he knew everything that was going on in the neighbourhood. The proverb, as Ray has it, says,

"Children pick up words, as pigeons peas.
And utter them again as God shall please."

Sniggs collected indefatigably, but most disinterestedly retained nothing. What he picked up in one house he let fall in the next; and so served as a regular gazette for the whole community. This was a great resource for poor Cuthbert, who, to keep up the simile of the pigeons, was as happy as any squeaker in the world to be crammed after Sniggs's fashion, however coarsely the aliment was supplied.

"Set the men, Sniggs," said Cuthbert, when the coast was quite clear—"any news?"

"You play with the red," said Sniggs, arranging the pieces accordingly—"no, sir, not much news. Miss Wobberly, the pretty girl with the flaxen hair, sir—sits opposite to you at church—hear she is going to be married—sugar-baker in London—called there just now—stomach out of order—touch of dyspepsia—too many minced pies—quantity of bile in a minced pie, sir—all meat, dirt, fat, plums, lemon-peel, and puff-paste. She'll be well by Tuesday—the mother a charming woman—asked me to dine Thursday—a little touch of erysipelas, not worth mentioning—pleasant creature. Wobberly a vulgar man—always ailing—can't get gout to show itself—gentlemanly disease the gout—gout and short sight are not destined for the vulgar—once saw a hackney-coachman with spectacles—wrote a paper upon it in a first-rate periodical—you begin, sir."

"I move my king's pawn," said Cuthbert; "it saves trouble to take the usual course."

"Exactly so, sir," said Sniggs; "that's what Major Frowsty says—an excellent patient of mine, who has a sort of hydrophobia—"

"Indeed—ah," said Cuthbert—"mad. I'll push him on another square."

"No," said Sniggs; "not mad: you don't see my fun. Hydrophobia—does not like bathing. I order a bath,—he says it is cold; order it hot,—says he don't like it: can't get him to wash;—nothing so good, sir:—excellent gentleman the Major;—did you know him abroad?"

"No," said Cuthbert; "just move that knight for me while I blow my nose. Where has he been?"

"Somewhere in your district," said Sniggs; "at Tunis, I think."

"I never was at Tunis," said Cuthbert.

"I think, between you and me, sir," said Sniggs, "it would have been as well if *he* had never been there: he won't take medicine, do all I can; and if I say he is really ill, he talks about a physician. I believe, between you and me, sir, that he ran away with the daughter of a Bey, or something of that sort, and nearly had his head cut off. But that's nothing to the affair of the Hackingtons, who live at the white house at the end of the lane—la bless you!—their second daughter (of course this is *entre nous*) is over head and ears in love with the ostler at the Cock and Bottle. Your move, sir. And the way I found *that* out was, that Mrs. Widdles, at the corner—the library, told me that Jim Walker, the ostler in question, had been into her shop to buy a sheet of paper to write home to his mother, and got her to do the letter, in which the whole facts were stated. I have just sent Miss Hackington a pill and a draught; but as the poet says, I cannot

'Minister to a mind diseased.'

So I made them quite innocent, dry bread and a little honey rolled up in the palm of my hand—eh, eh, sir? Of course this goes no farther. Check to your king."

"I like to hear the news," said Cuthbert, "although I don't know the people."

"Lord bless you, sir," said Sniggs, "I never let out

these sort of things except to *you*. Now of course I know all about Lieutenant Merman's *tendre* for Miss Fanny; but *then*, as I say, that is totally a different story; here we are, titled, a family of consequence and respectability;—mute as a mackerel, not a syllable passes my lips. Delightful family the Wells's, sir;—so clever Mr. Wells,—what a preacher!—makes me weep like a watering-pot when he gives us a charity sermon, although I always get myself called out to a patient before the collection, to save stumpy;—don't you think he is a powerful man, sir?"

"Your queen is in check," said Cuthbert.

"A thousand pardons," said Sniggs. "What's your notion as to tithes, sir?—quite legal, constitutional, and all that; but don't you think—just before I take the queen out of check—don't you think something might be done in regard to that question? The law by which tithe is secured to the clergy, sir, is just as good and as valid as that by which the first duke in the land holds his estates—eh, don't you see, sir? But I think still something might be done to get rid, you see, sir, of the objectionable part of the question. That's what I say to Mr. Wells. Mrs. Wells, I believe, is not so great a friend of mine; never goes beyond powders. Rhubarb and magnesia, or jalap and cream o' tartar, are the extremes, and those only for the housemaids. Still I have a high regard for them all. I think the tithe system operates unequally, sir. I take your rook;—you didn't see *that*, sir. All clergymen are not alike. I recollect reading, sir, that Dr. Prideaux—I don't know if you know much of him—said that some men enter upon their cures with as little knowledge of divinity as the meanest of their congregation—eh?—heard the story of human felicity—something inside of a pig; forgive me—but it is an apt illustration of the stupidity of a congregation."

"Very stupid," said Cuthbert; "do me the favour to push my rook over to the side of your queen; there, where it is guarded by that pawn. Yes, I think you are quite right."

"And then, as I say, sir," continued Sniggs, "the spirit—the public spirit of Mrs. Wells—that fancy ball and bazaar

for the charity-schools—what a sight!—dear young creatures exposing themselves in every way at the stalls, and selling things for fifteen shillings which they bought for five—passing them off, of course, for their own. Why now, there's that Mrs. Fletcher, I declare that woman ought no more to have gone out Tuesday week— O sir! such a state she is in—such a complication of disorders!—of course this is *entre nous*—what I call death in the pot—never mind—people must die when their time comes. I have put her through a regular course of steel—done all I could. Don't you recollect, sir, the story of the sick man at the watering place, who was sent down to tone himself up—went to a boarding-house, ignorant creature—that sort of thing—took all sorts of bitters to strengthen himself and bring him round, under the advice of one of those refined physicians who pick up guineas from ninnies, as I should say; and having dined and supped with his fellow-boarders, retired, as they did, to rest. In the middle of the night, the whole house was alarmed by noises much resembling those of a rabid dog, attended with a stamping of feet along the different passages of the house. This continued some time, but about two o'clock in the morning it subsided, and, as they say in the account of a naval action, 'the boarders had it all to themselves.' In the morning, complaints having been made to the matron, or whatever the female figure-head of such establishments is called, as to the row, she remonstrated with the patient, and begged to know why he disturbed the inmates of her else peaceable house? 'Why, ma'am,' said he, 'I am ordered to do it by my physicians, for the good of my health: which is the thing for which I am come here'—mark the English, sir. 'So,' says she, 'make a noise for the benefit of your health?' 'Yes,' says he, 'in conjunction with the wine which I drank at dinner.' 'How is that?' said the lady, who doubted whether her guest was more knave or fool. 'Yes,' said he, 'my doctor ordered me to come down here to take port wine at dinner every day, and bark every night: and so I will, let the consequences be what they may.' Don't you see, sir?—eh?—bark,—to bark at night; there was the mistake. Your king's in check."

"That's a very good story," said Cuthbert; "not but that bark is a very good thing to strengthen people; as for port wine, I can't touch it—drinking it is to me like having a peppered birch-broom poked down my throat."

"Never tried, Highness," said Sniggs, "as the King of Prussia said to the soldier—ever heard that, sir? The King of Prussia fond of music—hundred thousand men to sing one song—recollect—check—he once took a fancy to a brave grenadier—story of the bullet for the watch—that you have heard—never mind, *n'importe*. The King of Prussia says to the grenadier, 'Can you play the fiddle?' What d'ye think he answered, sir? Can't guess. 'Never tried, Highness'—new story that—ah, sir!—dear me, you have taken my knight."

"Just take it off the board for me, will you?" said Cuthbert, wholly unable from habit to lift a piece of ivory so ponderous.

"Talking of knights," said Cuthbert, and looking at his knight's horse's head, "did I ever tell you the story of my being run away with down Shooter's Hill, when I was quite a boy?"

"Shooter's Hill?" said Sniggs, with extremely well-acted curiosity; "no, I think not, sir."

"Well, it was very remarkable," said Cuthbert. "My poor father and I were going in a post-chaise just by the place where there is now a sort of castle in imitation of Severndroog, and something by the roadside frightened the off-horse, and away he went: this frightened the other, and they went down the hill at a tremendous rate, and everybody thought we should be dashed to atoms, and—you never—ah!—saw such a sight in your life—ah!"

"Well, sir," said Sniggs, (who, like everybody else who had been at Ashmead, had heard Cuthbert's pet story over and over again,) "and what happened?"

"Why,—ah!" said Cuthbert, nearly exhausted by the exertion of relating the adventure: "luckily, when they got to the bottom of the hill the horses stopped of themselves."

"Very lucky, indeed!" said Sniggs; "disappointed the surgeon there, sir—check to your king."

"Ah! that's a serious check," said Cuthbert; "I must think about *that*. Will you just ring the bell, Doctor—I must send for my snuff. Ah! and now you *are* up, do me the kindness just to stir the fire."

"Check to *my* king," continued Cuthbert; "umph!—so, so—Hutton, my snuff-box—see what o'clock it is—ah!"

"It is past four, sir," said Sniggs, looking at his watch. "We shall scarcely have light enough to finish the game."

"Ah!" said Cuthbert, "I am afraid we shall—I don't see how to get my king out of this scrape;" and hereupon the player fell into one of those lengthened reveries which are the characteristics of this noble and scientific diversion.

Hutton brought the snuff-box—he stood unheeded; at length Cuthbert, raising his eyes from the board with all the gravity of the automaton, looked vacantly at him for half a minute, until Hutton felt it necessary to recall his master to a sense of his situation, and said, "The snuff-box, sir."

"Oh!" sighed Cuthbert, "open it for me, Hutton—this is a puzzler—ah!" saying which he, with apparent difficulty, carried the pinch he had taken from the box to its destination.

As Sniggs watched the entire abstraction of Cuthbert from everything in the world except his jeopardized monarch, he could not avoid thinking of Franklin's description of the advantages derivable from the game; but having waited and watched, until it appeared to him that his amiable adversary had either dropped into a slumber, or, at least, a wakeful unconsciousness, burst upon him, by asking if he ever heard what Dr. Franklin said to Mr. Hancock, on the occasion of signing the treaty of American Independence,—"'We must be unanimous in this business,' said Hancock; 'We must all hang together.' 'Indeed we must,' said Franklin, 'or else we shall all hang separately.'"

"No, never," said Cuthbert, "never; they wern't hanged, were they? Upon my word, Doctor, I cannot take the trouble to get this king out of difficulty. Tell me what I *had* best do?"

"Oh, do you take counsel from your enemy, sir?" said Sniggs; "I should say——"

What we are not destined to know; for, at the moment in

which the new adviser was taking a searching look at the state of affairs, Cuthbert, overcome by the difficulty to which he had been subjecting himself, gave a tremendous yawn, accompanied by an attempted change of position upon his sofa cushions. in performing which evolution, his right leg came in contact with Mrs. Gilbert's delicate table, on which they were playing, which was instantly upset. Down went the board, the men, the eau de Cologne, and the snuff-box; knights and pawns were promiscuously scattered on the carpet, and Cuthbert, elevating himself, and leaning on his arm, gazed calmly on the scene of destruction; while Sniggs sat bolt upright in his chair, his eyes widely opened, his brows elevated, and his mouth contracted into the first position for whistling, looking at the vacant space before him, as spectators gaze on the slip whence a hugh ship has just slid into that which modern writers call her "native element," (in which she never had been before), or the crowd into an enclosure after the ascent of a balloon from the middle of it.

"*Sic transit gloria mundi!*" said Sniggs.

"To day is Tuesday," said Cuthbert; "ring the bell, Doctor, let us have in some of the people to pick up these men and things—the snuff is spilt; so is the eau de Cologne; and Mrs. Gilbert is so very particular about her carpet. Ah! what shall we do?"

"This, sir," said Sniggs, "is what you call turning the tables upon me."

"It did not fall on *you*, did it, Doctor?" said the unsuspecting Cuthbert.

"No; no harm's done," said Sniggs, who forthwith restored the piece of furniture to its proper place, and began picking up the scattered forces of the contending armies.

"Don't fatigue yourself," said Cuthbert: "you'll tire yourself to death, stooping about. Ah, dear me! what a flurry this accident has put me in!" Hutton made his appearance, and speedily restored order; however, it was getting too dark to begin a fresh game. The casualties consisted of the fracture of one or two pieces, two squares cracked in the inlaid board, the snuff lost, and the eau de

Cologne bottle severely wounded: and as it was getting late, Sniggs proceeded to gather up his hat and cloak, for the purpose of retiring.

"Hadn't you better dine here," said Cuthbert, "and let us renew our game in the evening—eh? do."

"You are very kind," said Sniggs, "I shall have great pleasure; but I must just step to the surgery, to make up some few things for my patients; I will return at six."

"Come back as soon as you can," said Cuthbert, "I'll get Hutton to wheel me to my room, and dress me directly, so that I shall be here waiting for you."

"I'll be with you as soon as possible," said Sniggs, who took his departure and hurried home, in order to tell Mrs. Sniggs, that she needn't have the fowl and bacon cooked, which had been ordered as an addition to the cold mutton, but make her dinner upon *that*, and keep the fowl and the bacon for the next day, when he did not "dine out."

"Well," said I, entering the room, as soon as I saw Sniggs departing across the lawn; "you have had a long spell with the doctor."

"Yes," said Cuthbert, "such a misfortune!—upset the table—broke the bottle—played the very deuce!"

"What, in a fit of enthusiasm?" said I.

"No," said Cuthbert; "ah, dear no!—in moving my leg."

"Well," said I, "that matters little. I am not sorry that Sniggs has moved *his* legs."

"You don't like Sniggs, Gilbert," said my brother.

"Indeed I do," replied I; "but *toujours perdrix* is too much of a good thing."

"But he is not a partridge, Gilbert," said my brother.

"No," said I, "nor a goose; but the very qualities for which you like his society, are those which make me less glad to see him than I otherwise should be. *You* like to hear all the gossip, of the place, which he unquestionably gives you with point and precision: but whenever I hear his anecdotes of patients, and his details of their disorders, I always recollect that as he is universally agreeable, *we*, in our turns, with all our little foibles and failings, mental and bodily, become equally subjects of amusement for everybody else in the neighbourhood."

"Ah, well," said Cuthbert, "there is something in *that*, to be sure, that never struck me before; but what have we about *us* that can be laughed at?"

"Oh, my dear brother," said I, "lay not that flattering unction to your soul; rely upon it we are just as good subjects for satire and caricature as our neighbours."

"Well, I don't see that," said my brother—"will you just ring the bell for Hutton? my shoe has got untied, and I want him to tie it for me. I am not conscious of saying or doing anything to be laughed at for." I did as I was desired; for although the readiest way of saving my indolent brother the trouble of tying his own shoe would have been tying it for him myself, I knew enough of him to be aware that however importunate and continuous his demands upon the attentions of his servant might be, he would not permit me to inconvenience, or, as he would have thought it, fatigue myself by doing so. Hutton came—tied the shoe—lifted the foot upon which it was worn, into its proper place on the sofa—and retired.

"I am sorry now that I asked Sniggs to come back and dine" said Cuthbert. So was I—not so much because, although Sniggs was really an agreeable and entertaining companion, he was coming to break in upon what had become to me the delightful homeishness of a really family party, or because Cuthbert's giving invitations without communicating with me, or even going through the ceremony of asking my concurrence, however certain it was never to have been withheld, perpetually reminded me more forcibly than was quite agreeable, of the real position in which I stood with regard to him. I knew that the odd things which he occasionally did in this way resulted from no feeling but an apathetic indolence of mind, which induced him to make just as much exertion as might secure for himself a certain quantum of amusement. Poor fellow! he had no wife to comfort or console *him*; and I often thought that the very sight of our domestic happiness, might perhaps unconsciously somehow worry and vex him. From what I had gathered of his lost lady, she certainly did not, in any one point of person or character resemble my dear Harriet; but still there was the contrast continually before his eyes. I there-

fore made every allowance for his wish to break in upon our serenity, which he could not himself enjoy, by the introduction of what were to *him* enlivening visitors.

The Nubleys were almost always at dinner with us, or, if not, "came in the evening," and, to be sure, they were generally counteracted by the Wells's; and this system of intervention and counteraction had the effect of amusing Cuthbert, although, as I admit, at the expense of my own comfort. Then there was another torment. Where was the absolute necessity of having Lieutenant Merman so constantly with us? Mrs. Wells had discovered that he had an extremely rich aunt; and now that Harriet was married—for well do I recollect being threatened with this very Lieutenant before she was—he appeared what mothers call an eligible match for Fanny. *Him* my wife undertook to invite; and if it were an eligible match for Fanny, and if she liked the man, and the man liked *her*, it was all very reasonable and natural that Harriet should wish to encourage it, especially as her father never made any secret of his strong prepossession in favour of the anti-Malthusian system of early marriages. But still it was a great nuisance to *me*; though I could not say so, because I knew the moment I raised an objection, Harriet would have sent Fanny away, and then, *she* would have been uncomfortable without her.

I remembered travelling once in a stage coach which runs from London—no matter whither,—with two remarkably nice young ladies:—the one in all the sparkling bloom of beauty; a sweet freshness glowed on her rosy cheeks, and love and laughter beamed in her radiant eyes; the other was pale and attenuated, her eyes were languid and downcast, and her weakness such, that she was literally lifted into the coach and laid, as it were, upon the seat opposite to that which her lively sister shared with *me*. She seemed to be kept alive only by cordial medicines, which were administered to her whenever we stopped to change horses. At the town where the rest of the passengers dined I got her some eau de Cologne, and her sister bathed her temples, and the sick girl looked grateful, and even wept; the pretty sister looked grateful, too, and I became extremely anxious to know more of their history.

At one period, as the day advanced, and the termination of our journey approached, the invalid sank into a slumber, of which I took advantage to inquire the nature of her complaint.

"Her case," said my fair companion, "is hopeless. She is returning to her native air, but it is rather to gratify a dying wish, than with any probability of success."

"What," said I, in a half whisper, lest I should disturb the sleeper, "what is she suffering from?"

"The physicians," replied my companion, "say that her heart is affected."

"Ah!" said I, "aneurism?"

"No, sir," said my fair friend, shaking her head,—"a lieutenant."

I confess this non-medical description of the young lady's disease, (partaking largely, to be sure, of "*scarlatina*,") startled me not a little. However, I looked at her with different eyes afterwards, and endeavoured to convince her sister of the deep interest which I took in both of them. At a particular point of the journey I left them, and shook hands with them, not without wishing to hear more of them at some future time.

It so happened that I *did* hear more of them; and although anybody who hereafter reads my notes may not care to hear it, it is satisfactory to myself to know that the poor invalid recovered, and by the next year was perfectly restored to health. Whether she arrived at this happy conclusion by putting herself under a *regimen* or into a *regiment*, I did not ascertain. As far as the simple fact goes, there it is.

My sister-in-law Fanny did not appear to me at all a likely subject for a similar complaint—her present turn was to laugh at her lover. Every woman has her own tactics in the great business of female life; and Fanny sought to win by smiles—at least if winning were her object;—and I must say I never saw any man more resolved upon her eventually becoming Mrs. Merman than her reverend father, who was assiduously re-enacting the drama in which I and Harriet had unconsciously performed some months before.

These words bring to me a subject upon which I shall

touch but lightly, because I may be disappointed; but as things look at present, it seems more probable that I shall attain to the dignity of a father "before four moons have filled their horns." A thousand new ties will then bind me to the world—a thousand new duties devolve upon me. Well! I have thus early in life seen enough of the world to qualify me for a guardian and a guide. To be sure, if I should have a son, he will not require much of my "guiding" for some years to come, and then I may look more sternly at the world's "follies," and become a severe parent, as the young beau generally becomes an old sloven; but I think I shall be able to make my son my friend,—a course of education most favourable to a boy who is born while his father is yet young.

By Jove, Sniggs has arrived, and the second bell is ringing—so away with my papers, and

"To dinner with what appetite we may."

CHAPTER II.

BUTLER tells us that—

"All love, at first, like generous wine,
Ferments and frets until 'tis fine:
But when 'tis settled on the lee,
And from th' impurer matter free,
Becomes the richer, still the older,
And proves the pleasanter the colder."

A humorous description of the effects of this *pleasant* frigidity is given by the facetious, yet almost now forgotten, George Alexander Steevens, who says, "Courtship is a fine bowling-green turf, all galloping round and sweethearting—a sunshine holiday in summer time; but when once through the turnpike of matrimony, the weather becomes wintry, and some husbands are seized with a cold fit, to which the faculty give the name of Indifference. Courtship is matrimony's running footman, but is too often carried

away by the two great preservatives of matrimonial friendship—delicacy and gratitude. There is also another very serious disorder with which ladies are sometimes seized during the honeymoon, and which the College of Physicians call Sullenness. This malady arises from some incautious word which has been addressed to the patient, who is then leaning on her elbow on the breakfast-table, her cheek resting upon the palm of her hand, her eyes fixed earnestly upon the fire, and her feet beating tat-too time. The husband, meanwhile, is biting his lips, pulling down his ruffles, stamping about the room, and looking at his lady like Old Nick. At last he abruptly says, 'Well, Ma'am, what's the matter with you?' The lady mildly replies, 'Nothing.' 'What is it you *do* mean?' 'Nothing.' 'What would you have me to do?' 'Nothing.' What *have* I done, Madam?' 'Oh, nothing.' And this quarrel arose at breakfast the lady very innocently observed she thought the tea was made with Thames water; the husband, in mere contradiction, insisted upon it that the tea-kettle was filled out of the New River.

This and the domestic felicity of Sir Charles and Lady Racket, "three weeks after marriage," brought to my recollection the scene I had witnessed between Mr. and Mrs. Daly at their lodgings in London, and made me congratulate myself upon the escape I had made from the superficial attractions of Miss Emma Haines. Thence my thoughts glanced to the expatriated husband and the separated wife in that case; and I began to wonder what had happened to my once worshipped idol, and how she was "making it out" with her mother and the major.

Nothing at all comparable with this was happening to *me*. Harriet was still all gentleness and playfulness. Her wishes seemed to be bounded by the desire of pleasing *me*; and her kindness transferred, on my account, not only to my brother, but to the children of his late wife, and even beyond those to others, who had no tie or claim whatever upon us, except as apparently contributing to his comfort, was unqualified as it was unaffected. This is charming; but still——

Here are the three Palwassers—two misses and one mas-

ter. What then?—they are endeared and attached—*they* scarcely know why—to my brother Cuthbert, who is their father-in-law. Kitty Falwasser, a fine girl of fourteen or fifteen, rubs his temples with eau-de-Cologne. “Jenny,” as *he* calls her, fetches his snuff-box, cuts the leaves of his books, puts the additional lump of sugar in his tea when Harriet does not make it sweet enough, and even goes the length occasionally of drinking it for him. Tom Falwasser is a pyrotechnist; his whole holidays are passed in making squibs and crackers; and he comes in, after dinner, as his father-in-law desires, smelling of gunpowder like a devil.

I remember, in some former notes of mine, I explained the innocence of this same word, as used colloquially to designate a certain wooden implement, in the use and exercise of which I greatly rejoiced before my union with Harry,—I call her Harry now: how odd!—and it is again necessary to say, lest I might be considered profane, that when I state Tom to have smelt like a “devil,” I mean that he smelt like one of those little, black, haycock-shaped mixtures of gunpowder and water which that mischievous dog Daly mixed with Lady Wolverhampton’s pastilles, upon the celebrated night when her ladyship’s lovely niece fell into the indescribable error committed in other days by the dairy-maid of Dr. Green, the Gloucester schoolmaster, under the auspices of that reverend and much revered gentleman, as recorded by the right worthy John Taylor, the water poet.

“Gilbert,” said Cuthbert to me, “these children of Emily’s—just give me my pocket-handkerchief, Jenny.—Poor Emily.—Well, I wish you had known her; it would have saved me a world of trouble in explaining all her—ah!—virtues and—ah!—merits.—They are nice children, and I love them as if they were my own. Besides, here they are—ah!—no trouble to me——”

I could not help thinking, mischievously, perhaps, of the “ready-made family” warehouses which one sees advertised about town.

“——And they have petitioned me to be allowed to invite Mrs. Brandyball, their schoolmistress, or, as they call her, their governess, to come here for the last week or fort-

night of their holidays, so that they may go back with her to school."

"I'm sure," said I, "nothing can be more agreeable than to do what you like. Harriet's confinement is shortly expected; but that, of course, will make no difference."

"She is a very nice woman, indeed," said Cuthbert. "I did not take the trouble to talk to her much; but she seems very full of proper feeling, and that sort of thing; and is about as good an European as I recollect to have seen for a great many years." A good European! thought I to myself. Well, I see what must happen; Mrs. Brandyball, whoever she is, must come. "Anything, my dear Cuthbert, you wish," said I, "of course you will command."

"No, no," said Cuthbert, "I can't exert myself to command; only I think it would please the children, and their dear mother, who—to be sure, she is gone; but then she is at rest—that's a great thing; only I should like to pay every respect to her memory, and to her children. They think it would make them better considered by the whole school, if she came here and saw how well they lived; and besides, it would save me the trouble of writing a letter, or dictating to Hutton what I wished to say to her respecting my views of their future education; and you *have* another spare room."

What *could* I reply? All the rooms in the house were spare rooms to *him*. So I said—"My dear Cuthbert, not another word. Mrs. Brandyball will be most welcome to Ashmead; as, indeed," I added, "is anybody upon earth whom you wish to come here."

"I have not many friends in this country," said Cuthbert; "that is to say, I dare say I have a good many people with whom I have been very intimate in India, and to whom I am really very much attached; but I have no idea how to find out where they are; some, of course, are dead, and—so—Well, but I am very . . . you have no objection to Mrs. Brandyball's visit. Now, the next thing we must do, is to get somebody to write to her to invite her."

"I think if Kitty Falwasser were to write," said I, "it

would perhaps be thought a civil way of doing the thing."

"Yes," said Cuthbert; "but then you know she does not write without lines; and then we should have to rule them, and when she had finished, to rub them out,—and besides, she does not like writing—she is too young for that yet. My poor wife gave instructions to Mrs. Brandyball, when the children were sent home, not to force their intellect,—let it develop itself,—don't fatigue their minds, poor things: think what a thing it would be to learn half a page of a French vocabulary in a day, and take a lesson of dancing afterwards! It's enough to wear them to skeletons!"

"I quite agree with you," said I, "that nothing is more absurd, not to call it barbarous, than the forcing system to which you allude, nor anything more lamentable than to see children repeating by rote whole pages of history or poetry, conceived in terms which to them are inexplicable, and even delivered in a language which they don't understand. Yet still I think Kitty Falwassar might in her fourteenth or fifteenth year contrive to write a letter to her governess, inasmuch as she wrote you a remarkably nice announcement of the approaching holidays."

"Oh, that," said Cuthbert, raising himself a little upon one of his elbows, "took her thirteen days' constant labour,—so she tells me—did it over two-and-twenty times; and at last got one of the teachers to put in all the capital letters. No,—Kitty has no turn for writing,—she colours prints very nicely: she has painted all the kings' heads in her 'History of England,'—she has a genius that way,—her poor mother used to be very clever in—what they call—I can't recollect,—but it was cutting holes in cards, and painting through them—something about tinting I think—no—if you don't like to write, I'll dictate a note to Hutton, and then he can take it himself to the post-office. I want to send my watch down to Stephenson's shop, for somehow I have lost—or dropped—or mislaid my watch-key; I dare say it is somewhere under the sofa cushions: however, he'd better go and get me another; and then Stephenson can set my watch by the church clock. I only found out half an hour ago that it has not been going since Tuesday, when I set it last."

I could scarcely keep silence during this beautiful illustration of my helpless brother's character, which developed itself in every action of his life, if action the evasion of all movement in which he delighted could be called. However, I wanted to hear the conclusion of his labour saving scheme, before I suggested to him that my wife would probably be the properest person to give the invitation.

"Oh! certainly," said Cuthbert; "but that will give her a great deal of trouble: and then so near her confinement,—somebody had better write it in her name."

"No, my dear brother," said I, "Harriet is quite strong enough to write a letter; she likes employment both mental and bodily,—she'll be delighted."

"So shall I," said my brother; "but it is quite wonderful to see her; and to think,—Oh dear, dear, what a heap of trials women have to undergo! Yes; then that, I think will be the best way,—it will look civil, and attentive, and kind. I wonder I had not thought of that at first."

"I suppose," said I, "it had better be done immediately?"

"Yes, certainly," replied Cuthbert; "Kitty was very anxious about it this morning, because I think she told me the lady was gone somewhere—where, I don't remember—to stay for a fortnight,—from whence she could take this on her way home. I'm sure you'll like her—she is so lady-like in her manners, and so gentle, and talks so well, and so very much attached to the children."

"That her presence will be agreeable to you," said I, "is as I have already said, sufficient of itself to render her a welcome visitor here."

"There's another thing the girls told me to ask you," said Cuthbert; "your youngest sister-in-law has been talking to them about—oh dear, my head!—about some very clever dancing-master who lives here; and they were saying if you had no objection, they should like to take lessons three or four times a week for an hour or two,—it would put them forward,—how they can take this trouble I don't understand; but they are young and light, to be sure,—and so, I said I would ask you. The drawing room isn't used in the mornings, and perhaps—"

"Oh, certainly," said I; "they will not in the least

interfere with us—only, perhaps, when Harriet is confined, we may—”

“Oh, that’s another matter,” said Cuthbert; “Kitty has got all the particulars of the man’s terms; and I had the paper yesterday, but I’m sure I haven’t any idea where it is now. Do just ring the bell, Gilbert; I’ll get Hutton to look for it, and then he can take a message about it.” I rang the bell, and Hutton appeared.

“Have you seen,” said Cuthbert to the servant, “a paper about the terms of a dancing-master that Miss Falwasser gave me yesterday?”

“Yes, sir,” said Hutton, “Mr. Kittington; I have been there, sir,—to his house. Miss Falwasser told me to desire him to call upon you to-day: he said he would be here at three. I thought, sir, Miss had told you so herself, or I should have mentioned it.”

“Oh, that’s all very convenient,” said Cuthbert; “I’ll see him when he comes. Where *are* the young ladies?”

“Out in the laundry, I believe, sir,” said Hutton, “acting a play; Master Tom has got some fireworks there, and they are all dressed up; and Miss Fanny Wells, and her sister, and Mr. Merman are there.”

“Dear me!” said Cuthbert; “what a pity they don’t come and act here; it would amuse us excessively; it is quite out of the question going all the way across the courtyard. What droll things,—eh?”

This all sounded mighty playful and extremely pretty; but the circumstances, the free and easy manner of Miss Kitty Falwasser considered, are not altogether satisfactory to me, I confess. It was clear that the two girls entirely managed their indolent father-in-law; and that the elder one, fully conscious of her power over him, had, having merely expressed a wish, and asked permission to take lessons in dancing, reckoned on his compliance so much as a matter of course, as not to think it necessary to wait even till she had obtained it, before she sent for the Terpsichorean professor. As to *my* opinion or objection upon the subject, it was clear that none of the family considered them of the slightest importance.

I certainly had the curiosity to visit the “theatre,” where

I found Miss Falwasser with her face blackened, dressed up in a shawl and turban, having squeezed herself into a pair of her brother Tom's trowsers, personating Othello, while Jenny was exhibiting herself as Desdemona,—Tom's only bargain being, that he was to fire the salute from the batteries at Cyprus, which were ingeniously represented by one of the coppers in the laundry, which was fitted up with battlements, and cannon round its edge, while the active contriver was concealed within, from which ambush he cunningly managed to raise his hand unseen to the touchhole of his small artillery, the first one of which that was fired recoiled with considerable force, and severely wounded the skilful gunner just between his eyes.

Tom bellowed, the girls screamed, and the only thing to be done was to send for Sniggs. Fanny Wells was dreadfully agitated, and was led to her room by the attentive and assiduous Lieutenant, her sister Bessy following her, but with a far different expression of countenance. All this was unpleasant: but what could I do? It was clear to me that the elder of the young ladies was blessed with what is called a spirit—a lively imagination, and not the most profound veneration for rigid truth. Her ideas were rather of the romantic, and although her ignorance of the essentials of education were to my eyes and ears apparent, nature had compensated to her for any deficiency of taste or erudition, by giving her a disposition to inquisitiveness upon all matters except those which were likely to be advantageous either to her manners or her morals.

Unfortunately for Kitty she was handsome, and every body was foolish enough to tell her so; which, so long as fortune afforded her a maid and a mirror, was evidently a work of supererogation. Her sister Jane was her slave, and with a totally different character, temperament, and disposition, compelled to join in pursuits for which she had naturally no inclination, because she literally dared not disobey her senior.

Sniggs arrived in less than half an hour to examine Tom's wounds, and a few minutes after came Kittington, the dancing master, to receive Cuthbert's commands about the lessons. Harriet, who certainly was not so much affected by

the oomp on Tom's nose as I apprehended she might have been, sat down to write Mrs. Brandyball a letter of invitation; and while Tom was bellowing like a calf up and down stairs, Fanny Wells sobbed most interestingly, and Jane and Bessy talking over the explosion as something terrific, I was assailed at once in the drawing-room, where Cuthbert was deposited, by the medical opinions of the apothecary, the discussion of terms with the dancing-master, and the hypocritical sentimentalism of Lieutenant Merman whom I admit I cordially detested.

"The accident," said Sniggs, "is providentially unimportant: an inch one way or the other might have made it serious—right eye—left eye—one or the other might have gone—but in the middle, between the two eyes, is what I call 'In medio tutissimus *Eye bis*'—not bad that, Mr. Gurney, considering I am only a pupil myself. The worst effect will be a little discolouration of the skin. I'll send up something by way of fomentation, which shall set all to rights: but I would advise you to caution Master Falwasser not to repeat the experiment."

"Certainly, I shall," said Cuthbert. "Foolish boy, to take all that trouble to load all those little cannon, and then to get into a copper to fire them. Dear, dear, how indefatigable youth is in the pursuit of pleasure!"

"Ah!" said Sniggs, turning to Mr. Kittington, "good day—how is Mamma—lumbago better?—did not call this morning—used the opodeldoc?—sister quite well?"

"Quite well, thank you," said Kittington.

"Well, I'll be off home for the lotion for Master Tommy," said Sniggs, "and will look in in the evening to see how he is going on." Away went Sniggs, with this friendly promise of another visit. I left Cuthbert to settle his schemes with Kittington, to whose presence he felt it necessary to summon his fascinating daughters in law, in order to give him a notion of their peculiar graces. Bessy Wells had been his pupil, so the meeting was no doubt extremely satisfactory to all parties. All I know of it was, that at its termination Mr. Kittington was appointed to attend Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, and that Merman invited himself not only to be present at the perform-

ances, but to join our family circle on the then present day—

“ His custom always in the afternoon.”

Well, this was certainly no improvement to my prospects, nor were the comfort and regularity of my establishment very much improved by the extraordinary proceedings of Cuthbert, not only as regarded his promiscuous invitations to strangers, but as related to the little nicknackeries in which he was in the habit of revelling himself. After various attempts to describe, through Hutton, the *véritable* mode of dressing a kabob, or sending up a pillau, he went the length of having my cook,—I say *my* cook, as if, in point of fact, everything in the house were not his—into the breakfast-room or the drawing-room, if that happened to be “head-quarters” with the ladies, whom he never left; and there instruct her in the arcana of Oriental gastronomy, not theoretically but practically, by superintending in his horizontal position the cuttings and choppings, triturations, amalgamations, and all the other botherations which he considered necessary to produce one or two dishes, his partiality for which he attributed to the circumstance of the late Mrs. Cuthbert Gurney having been particularly fond of them.

There really was something in Cuthbert’s indolence which was extremely trying to the patience, or the activity, or whatever it might be, of those around him. He seemed unconsciously to glory in his, to me, melancholy inaction. He certainly was one of those of whom Johnson says, “They boast that they do nothing, and thank their stars that they have nothing to do; who sleep every night till they can sleep no longer, and rise only to take sufficient exercise to enable them to sleep again”—in this particular the likeness failed, for Cuthbert took none—“who prolonged the reign of darkness by double curtains, and never see the sun but to tell him how they hate his beams: whose whole labour is to vary the posture of indulgence, and whose day differs from their night only as a couch or chair differs from a bed.”

Well, then came another worry. Harriet, first prejudiced against my poor friend Sniggs by her mother, who cer-

tainly entertained a sneaking mistrust of his professional skill, and now, in the case of becoming a mother, still more disinclined to attempt to conquer her dislike, resolved, even if she were to have no medical attendant and certainly to die, not to have Sniggs as her "doctor" on the approaching occasion. I ventured to remonstrate, ran over a catalogue of names of the best people in the neighbourhood who employed him; but all in vain, to her the loss of her infant sister Adelgitha was light by comparison with the anticipation she entertained of his giving a sort of circular description to the good folks of Blissford of all the circumstances connected with her case, whatever it might turn out to be. She afforded me the first proof of a resolution to have her own way upon this occasion. But then it was quite reasonable. She had, in the first place, no confidence in his abilities; and, in the second, she had heard him give relations of the calamities of all our neighbours, in a tone and manner which she dreaded lest he should adopt when her own indisposition became the subject of general conversation.

There are certain points upon which a woman must neither be thwarted or disturbed. Harriet was about to assume a new character in the world—so was I; but then, dear soul, she was so much more personally concerned with the change, that the moment she expressed her decided aversion from calling Sniggs into council, I resolved that he should most certainly not be admitted. But, as one likes to live peaceably with his neighbours, and as Sniggs was, I am sure, a kind-hearted man, and, as I believe, an able practitioner, I saw at once that the only way to soothe his feelings and moderate his anger at being excluded, would be to send to London for some most extraordinary popular accoucheur, a baronet if possible, but decidedly not below the degree of knighthood, whose unquestionable claims would set to rest in a momene the uneasiness of the Blissford apothecary, even though the magnate himself had in other days filled a similar situation to his own.

All these things worried me. However, able or not, skilful or a bungler, wise or foolish, my wife will not have Sniggs; so I must look out.

In the course of the afternoon peace was perfectly re-established, and Cuthbert, quite overcome by the effort of hear

ing Sniggs's scientific description of Tom's accident, and making his arrangements with Mr. Kittington, was reclining on the sofa, with Kitty sitting rubbing his ankles, and Jenny bathing his temples with what his man Hutton called "O go along," meaning thereby "eau de Cologne." Tom, with his head dressed like Cupid, but in every other respect looking like an imp, was seated at a table thumbing over a book, which he affected to be reading, and Fanny Wells was occupied in painting a rose upon the top of a paper card-box.

"Well," said I, as I entered the room, "the invitation to Mrs. Brandyball is gone—are you pleased, Kitty?"

"Oh yes, uncle," said Kitty, "it will make her so good-natured to us when we go back."

"Ah, poor things," said Cuthbert, "they have enough to do when they are at school. Oh dear! Well, Gilbert, I have settled about the dancing. He can come very early in the morning twice a-week, and about the middle of the day on the other two days; but he seems to think you must have the carpet taken up in the drawing-room. They can't do their—what does he call them?—some of the steps—on a carpet. So I told him I thought it would take great labour to do that; but Hutton says that he, and James, and the coachman, can take it up in an hour."

"Yes," said I, not quite gratified at the proposal of uncarpeting the best room in my house, and converting it into a dancing-school; the more especially as it joined our own bed-room, and as the early lessons might in some degree interfere with Harriet's morning slumbers. However, I said Yes.

"What a nice little foot Mr. Kittington has got!" said Kitty Falwasser, as she rubbed, as I thought with an air of invidious comparativeness, those of Cuthbert.

"La, my dear child," said Fanny, "how came you to notice that?"

"I'm sure I don't know, cousin," said Kitty; "I always look at gentlemen's feet. He is a very nice man altogether I think, and so does cousin Bessy."

Yes, thought I, and *you* are a very nice young lady; however, the holidays don't last for ever.

"He is quite a swell," said Tom, looking out from under

the bandage which Sniggs had applied to his darkening eyes.

"Charming boy," said I to myself.

"Much smarter than the chap as teaches at Doctor Brushers."

"Tom," said I, "what sort of a master is the Doctor?"

"He's a rum-un to look at," said Tom; "a hold chap and wears a wig, all fuzzy out, and we sticks pens hinto hit, whichever on us his behind him hat lesson time."

"Is he much in school himself?" said I.

"Not a great deal," said Tom; "he's a good deal hover at the White Art! he's a dab at billiards, and e's halmost halways at it: yet e wollops hus like sacks if he kitches us play-ing marvels for hanything."

"Are there many boys at the school?" said I, marvelling myself at the style of Tom's language and his mode of pronunciation, of which, as he was always, till the recent accident, somewhere out of sight playing with gunpowder, I had not had any great previous experience.

"Ow many?" said Tom, "heighty-height last alf."

"Are you kept very hard at work, my dear boy?" said Cuthbert, looking at him with a mingled expression of affection and compassion, which appeared to me most absurd.

"Oh, yes, Pa," said Tom, "I believe so too; we get hup at six—too minutes allowed to dress—then down to prayers. Billy Dixon gabbles them over fast enough, I can tell you. Old Brusher don't get hup imself so hearly."

"And who is Billy Dixon, dear?" said Cuthbert, in a tone of enquiry so pathetic, that, although he *was* my brother, I could scarcely help laughing.

"Billy Dixon is one of the hushers: is name is Williams. All the chaps calls him Billy Dixon, just as they calls Opkins, the Hinglish husher, Snob. E reads prayers; then we as to say the lessons what we learnt hover night; then them as is igh hup, does Hugh Clid and Matthew Mattocks. I'm not hin them yet. And we does cipher-ing till height: then we breakfasts, and after that, we goes into the back yard and washes our ands and faces; then hout again into the play-ground till ten; then in again till twelve; hout ti'll dinner at one."

"And do you live well, my poor boy?" said Cuthbert.

"Lots of grub," said Tom, "sich as it is. Sundays we has baked beef—long, bony bits—hunderdone—and plenty of ard pudden; Saturdays, scrapings and stick-jaw. Hobliged to bolt all the fat, else we ketches toko. They gives us swipes for dinner and supper, with cheese as ard as hiron, and as black has my at; but they tells us it's olesome."

"And does Dr. Brusher," said I, curious to ascertain the advantages which Tom derived from the tuition of so able a man, in return for sixty pounds a-year, and no extras—"does the Doctor attend much to your general conduct?"

"Yes," said Tom; "he reads lectures to us, and hexamines us in the hevenings."

"But I mean with regard to your manners and conversation," said I.

"Bush—he be smoked!" said Tom. "If e was to hinfere with our big boys, they'd

"Send him to the chimney-top to fetch away the bacon."

"What a droll creature you are!" said Cuthbert.

"Mother Bopps is very good-natured to some of the little chaps," continued the communicative pupil.

"And who may *she* be?" said Fanny Wells.

"Oh! Mother Brusher," said Tom; "but only we halways calls her Bopps. I don't know why;—hit's halways bin so, afore I went."

"Ay, it is the nature of women to be kind," said Cuthbert, sighing.

"She takes care," said Tom, "that we wash our faces and ands Saturday nights, to be all nice and clean for church on Sunday morning."

"But I presume," said I, "you repeat your ablution when you get up?"

"No we don't," said Tom; "we repeat the Colic of the day—the little uns does Cathekiss. As for our feet, we as em washed once a quarter."

"And in what," said I, perfectly astonished at the erudition, delicacy, and cleanliness of my young connexion, "in what does the doctor examine you?"

"In the front parlour," said Tom.

"No," said I; "but I mean upon what subjects?"

"Oh!" said Tom; "E hasks hus hall manner of run questions hout of istory or the Dixonary."

"Well, now shall I ask you some?" said I.

"Oh, don't give the poor boy any trouble in the holidays, Gilbert," said Cuthbert; "he is home for relaxation and amusement."

"Oh, but hi likes hit, Pa," said Tom.

"So do I," said Kitty; "I like to be examined. I have got two medals and 'Thompson's Seasons,' for prizes in Jography."

"Well," said I "Kitty, you shall join our class." So, taking up the newspaper which (as newspapers will do) happened to lie upon the table, I asked my fair young friend where the Mediterranean was?

"In Asia, uncle," said Kitty without the slightest hesitation

"Oh, you fool!" said Tom; "hi knows better than that; it's in America."

"But how do you get into it, Kitty?" said I.

"Through Beliring's Straits," answered the young lady. I stared, smiled, and proceeded.

"What is a quadruped, Tom?" said I.

"A large fish," replied Tom.

"That it an't Tom," said Kitty. "I know what it is: it is an animal that runs upon the ceiling, with a great many legs"

Whether Cuthbert was himself not more enlightened than his dear daughter and son-in-law, or whether he thought it too much trouble to set them right, I don't pretend to say; he looked perfectly satisfied, and I thought it not worth while to endanger his repose by questioning the accuracy of their answers.

"Jenny, dear," said I to the simple creature, "what is a pedagogue?"

"A place to put statues in, uncle," said fair innocence.

"I wonder," said Kitty, "how you come to know that so well—somebody must have told you—I could not have guessed it."

"What king of England," said I to Kitty, "reigned immediately before George the First?"

"Before him?" said Kitty; "George the Second, uncle."

"Bush!" said Tom; "how could that be, you fool? he reigned after him. I guess no hit was that reigned directly afore him."

"Who?" said I.

"Heddudd the Fifth," said Tom.

"It is unlikely," said I, reading from the newspaper, "that the French minister will be able to cajole the emperor into such a measure. What does cajole mean?"

"To kill a man," said Tom.

"Well," said I, "I wont bore you any more, for your Pa is getting sleepy; but what are you, Tom—animal, vegetable, or mineral?"

"I am a vegetable," said Tom.

"Then," said I, "what is a cauliflower?"

"A mineral," said Tom.

"I know *I'm* an animal," said Kitty.

Yes, thought I, my dear, and rather a strange one too. If this examination were written to meet the public eye, the reader would fancy its absurdities too gross to bear even the semblance of probability; nevertheless, I have put down this portion of it *verbatim* from the lips of the hopeful children with whom my house is so elegantly furnished.

"How soon an accident happens," said Cuthbert, gravely raising himself in his usual manner on one elbow, and looking at Tom—"that dear boy might have lost his sight by the blow of that cannon. I'm sure I never see anything of the kind without thinking of the day my poor dear father and I were coming down Shooter's Hill—near that Severndroog place, and the horses took fright at something in the road, and——"

"Yes, Pa," said Kitty, "but then they stopped of themselves when they got to the bottom of the hill. You see I never forget anything you tell me."

"Dear girl," said Cuthbert, making a sort of kissatory motion with his lips, to which Kitty immediately responded, leaving his feet, and conferring on him a chaste and filial salute.

"I fancy," said I, "it is getting on for dinner-time. Who dines here?—does anybody know?"

"I asked the Nubleys," said Cuthbert, "but they can't come."

"And Harriet has asked Mr. Merman," said Fanny.

"And I begged dear Bessy to stop," said Kitty.

"And I think," said Fanny, "Harriet has invited Ma, because Pa dines at Lord Fussborough's."

Well, thought I, this sounds to *my* ears very much as if I had painted over my door—"An ordinary here at six o'clock every day, Sundays not excepted;" or rather, as if I were the keeper of a *table d'hôte*, at which, as *hôte*, I was permitted to preside, rather as an accommodation to the company in the way of carving, than as being master of the house. These were minor evils, but I could not, without pain and apprehension, witness the growing power and influence of the three alien children of the late Mr. Falwasser over my kind-hearted placid brother. Upon every occasion, before and since his return from India, he had practically evinced his affection and regard for me, and I am the last person in the world to be jealous of any kindness or liberality which he may feel inclined to bestow upon others; but in this case he seemed to me to be entailing upon himself a responsibility of which he himself was not aware, and to sustain which he was physically as well as morally incapable.

When Kitty grew to be sixteen or seventeen—or rather when she became sixteen or seventeen, for she had grown in outward appearance to that age already—it was clear to me that with her character and disposition, her unflinching adherence to any favourite point until she had carried it joined to a consciousness of the power she actually possessed over Cuthbert, she would lead him into all sorts of difficulties, against which he had not sufficient strength of mind to contend. Of course I was not constantly with them, and they were frequently alone, or perhaps with Jane as a third; and it is easy to imagine that entirely freed from restraint—although I must admit she never appeared much *géné'd* by either my presence or that of Harriet—she spoke her mind and expressed her wishes with a sincerity and decision proportionate to Cuthbert's acknowledged affection for the children, and his gradually increasing concessions.

I repeat, I am not jealous of this ; but I am not blind to the effect of the influence of these young people, who, although as I have ascertained, lamentably ignorant of the rudiments of education, are—at least I speak particularly of Kitty—full of low worldly cunning. I perceive in Cuthbert's manner to my wife less tenderness of feeling, less regard for her comforts, less deference to her wishes, than it exhibited previous to their invasion of my territory—if mine it can be called ; and Harriet herself, I am sure is sensible of the change, although she is too kind even to hint such a thing to me.

I must struggle with these feelings—I find myself growing irritable and querulous—I am *not* master of my own house.—Ay, there it comes again—*is it my own house ?* Surely, while that is the question, Cuthbert should more carefully than anybody else in the world prevent my feeling how much I owe him, and how dependent, in point of fact, I am upon him. I must, however, check the growing dislike I feel for Kitty—her manner, her conversation, are repugnant to my notions of the attributes of anything so young ; it seems to me that every suggestion she makes is founded upon calculation—every look at Cuthbert is studied—her dress, regulated generally by bad taste, is ill suited to her age, if not to her figure ; and the very slip-off of her frock from the top of her left shoulder, meant to seem accidental and look negligent, is the result of a study of her attractions, which she fancies increased by the display. And yet this miniature Machiavel, who is at this moment leading Cuthbert about like a child, purposes to get into the Mediterranean through Behring's Straits, and tells us gravely that a quadruped is an animal that runs upon the ceiling with a great many legs ! It is wonderful to see how much Nature has done for her, and how little Art. To my mind, however, bipeds are more likely to interest her attention than quadrupeds at a not much later period of her life.

Dinner came—Mr. Wells came—the Lieutenant came—Tom dined at table because the explosion had lost him his regular dinner—and, for the first time, the two young ladies. I said nothing, but looked at Harriet, who made me understand in a moment that Cuthbert had desired it.

We were crowded, and the girls had dined before; and Cuthbert, I thought, saw not exactly that I was annoyed, but surprised, at the new arrangement; for he presently announced that, as poor Tommy had had no dinner, he had told Hutton to tell the butler to lay a cover for him; and that when he had done so, Kitty had said it would be very dull for her and Jane to be by themselves, and that she did not mind where she sat; "and," added he "so I have put her close by *me*." And there they did sit, and so did I—not much satisfied with what I saw, but certainly not anticipating the coming events of the evening.

CHAPTER III.

I AM perfectly sure that the growth of affection, so generally admitted to be the inevitable result of juxtaposition and constant association between those whose tastes accord, whose feelings assimilate, and whose habits and principles are congenial, is neither so rapid nor so decided as the progress of dislike when once the sentiment has taken hold of one. I felt as I sat carving a huge haunch of mutton, which in our moderate establishment still maintained its place at head-quarters, unbanished to the side-table, that I really *was* nothing more than purveyor to the party, and likened myself to one of those mountains of flesh who were wont to cut slices from huge rounds of beef in a shop at the corner of St. Martin's-court, and sell them—

‘To every passing villager.’

There were seven or eight people to be helped to mutton—of which seven or eight, my wife and brother were the only two who had any legitimate claims to places at the table. It is all very true, Mrs. Wells is a very nice woman, but even she, I think, interferes more than is necessary in my domestic affairs, and seems to impress upon Harriet's mind that the mode in which matters are managed at the

Rectory is the only system to be adopted and adhered to all over the world. I hate boiled pork,—so does Harriet,—a parsnip is my aversion, it reminds me of a sick carrot. No matter—Mrs. Wells has instilled into her daughter's mind the necessity of having certain prescribed joints and dishes on certain particular days in the week; and accordingly it was but yesterday that I was taken by surprise with an odious leg of boiled pork, accompanied by a mixture resembling nothing but a dab of yellow plaster for a wart which they call pease-pudding.

To-day was mutton day, of which fact I was fully aware long before dinner-time. My predecessor at Ashmead could not endure the smell of the dishes he was destined afterwards to taste, and accordingly consulted one of our most eminent architects upon the construction of his kitchen. The kitchen was built under the direction of the modern Vitruvius at the extremity of a long passage divided by double doors, and ventilated in the middle by a sort of open turret, which was to render the whole affair unsmellable. The result is, that the servants, who are continually passing and repassing along this passage, invariably fasten, or as they call it "trig," both doors back, in order to save themselves the trouble of shutting or opening them; my cook, who dreads the rheumatism, fastens up the flappers of the turret: and the consequence is, that the north-easterly wind, which gets into the kitchen on the other side, blows the whole flavour of the feast right through this kind of funnel, into the hall and house generally, but more particularly into the dinner-room itself, from which the door to the offices opens directly into the passage.

Cuthbert, who looks like parchment and smells like a Japan cabinet, is perfectly indifferent to every inconvenience that does not compel him to move. If he get his curry done to his liking,—the light yellow Moorman's curry, with pickles; and his promiscuous kabobs, in which he revels at breakfast, or his occasional pillau,—he is content; although on the days when the flavour of mutton does not supersede every other scent, the whole place is redolent of oriental condiments.

Kissing Kitty is a venial offence as far as her father-in-

law is concerned, but it makes me sick to see him feeding her with his own spoon at table, picking her out little nice bits of sweetmeats, and then making her "sweeten his glass," before he drinks his wine. Well, a fortnight more and the holidays will be over, and then something like order will be restored here.

I had concluded the round of feeders, and helped myself, and was beginning to make preparations for eating my dinner, when, just as I had got a morsel on my fork, and while it hung, Mahomet-like, midway between my plate and my mouth, its progress was suddenly stayed by Cuthbert.

"Gilbert," said he, "here is a young lady who will trouble you for a bit more,—that which you sent her before is hardly enough done; just turn the haunch over, and cut her a little slice—under—there—I cannot point out the place exactly—where it's brown: Kitty is like her pappy, she likes her meat well done; don't you, dear?"

"I like whatever you like, Pa," said the young lady.

"Hyæna," said I to myself, as I essayed for the third time to turn the unwieldy joint, a trial of my skill and patience which ended in its slipping from my hold and toppling down into the midst of its gravy, of which it made a sudden dispersion, producing an effect similar to that of one of Shrapnell's shells upon a small scale; and I confess I was rather pleased than vexed when I saw a considerable portion of the lava-like liquid fly from the dish into the face of the odious Tom Falwasser, who received the aspersion with the worst imaginable grace, and the worst possible philosophy.

"Bush!" cried the savage; "ain't I cotched it now? I say, Pa, my heye is hout."

"Poor boy!" said Cuthbert. "Ah, that's it; misfortunes never come alone,—my fault—dear me! Oh, Gilbert, don't trouble yourself,"—and so on, until he had persuaded the yahoo that he was wretchedly persecuted, and induced Miss Falwasser to give me a look, such as she would have bestowed upon my butler, if by any accident he had utterly spoiled her sky-blue silk dress, by spilling half a plate of soup on it, in handing it over her shoulder. I was in a bad humour, and yet those who know me have always fancied

It would take a great deal to drive me into one. As Caleb Quotem says, in his song in the admirable farce of the "Lovers' Progress,"—

"Many small articles make up a sum."

And upon the present occasion the truth of the line was most painfully evident to me, inasmuch as it was a combination of little irritations by which I was affected. Harriet seemed unaccountably lively; and she and Fanny had some joke between them and that odious red-fisted Lieutenant Merman. I hate *him* more and more and more every day. What is it—what has soured my temper?

I was asking myself this question seriously, for the third or fourth time, just as the second course had been removed—if second course, a brace of pheasants at one end of the table, some sea-kale at the other, and some pastry and jellies at the sides, could be so called: and I felt a certain degree of relief from the cessation of a duty with which, I admit, mingled very little pleasure—when I heard the sound of carriage wheels approaching the house door. That sound suddenly ceased, and a peal on the bell set the house itself ringing. Everybody looked amazed. We expected nobody. The Nubleys were not coming. Wells could not have left the earl's so early; we all were astounded, save and except my brother Cuthbert, and that minx Kitty, who, when we were all staring at each other, in "amazement lost," said to her "Pa," loud enough for me to hear, "I shouldn't wonder if it was—"

What these ominous words portended, I could not venture to surmise; but my astonishment and dismay were not exceedingly small, when I saw my brother's man Hutton enter the room, and, proceeding to Miss Kitty, whisper something in her ear, and beheld her, after giving Cuthbert a pat on the arm, jump up from her chair, and run out of the room, followed by Jane, to whom she made a signal, into the hall, where, in a few moments, the noise of the laughing and giggling of girls and women, and the barking of dogs, resounded. In the midst of my amazement—in Ireland it would have been alarm—at the invasion of my house at so unusual an hour, in bounced Miss Kitty, who,

running to Cuthbert, exclaimed with a look of triumphant sauciness, "It is *her*."

"Where is she?" said Cuthbert.

"Gone up with Jane into our room to take off her things," said Kitty; and, turning to my wife, who looked petrified at the performance in progress, added, "It's only Mrs. Brandyball, dear."

Dear! to *my* wife!—only Mrs. Brandyball!

"Why," said I, "she cannot have got our letter?"

"No," said Cuthbert, "but I can explain that. Kitty had said she was sure you would be glad to see her on her way back—and so—I hadn't time to mention—this—before, but—"

"It makes no difference," said I. "Harriet, dear, hadn't you better just see——"

"Oh no!" said Miss Falwasser, interrupting; "don't hurry, because dear governess has got something to tell *me* all to myself, and I'll go up and keep her company till you go into the drawing-room." Saying which, and seeming perfectly satisfied that her proposal for the arrangement was in fact a *fiat*, she proceeded unchecked by anybody to fulfil her intentions.

"This is quite a surprise," said Harriet, looking, as I thought, a little ruffled by the event—"did *you* know Mrs. Brandyball was coming to-day, cousin?"

"Why," said Cuthbert, "I don't exactly recollect what dear Kate said about it—I know she told me that when she heard from Mrs. Brandyball, she seemed to wish to know whether her coming here would be agreeable to you—and then, as far as I can recollect, Kate told me that she wished you to send her an invitation, as if it originated with yourself—so that she might not feel a difficulty in accepting the one she had given her; however, as she is come, all the trouble of writing to her to ask her might have been saved. Tommy, dear, pick up my toothpick—eh—ah."

"I did not know," said I (for I confess the tact of Miss Falwasser in her manœuvres was anything but soothing), "I did not know that Kitty had heard from the lady."

"Yes," said Cuthbert, "one day last week, I *think*."

"I didn't see the letter amongst ours," said I.

"No," said Cuthbert, "Kate's maid always goes down to the servants' hall when the letters come, to see if there are any for *her*; it saves us the trouble of sending them up to her after we get up—ah!"

All this sounded odd—there appeared a kind of precocity in her measures which did not tend in the slightest degree to exalt the opinion of the young lady's character or disposition which I had previously formed, and Cuthbert evidently saw what was passing in my mind.

"You know," added he, "the children are up long before we are, so that there is no reason why Kate should wait to get any letter which comes for her till we go to breakfast."

"None in the least," said I: "only I was not prepared to hear that so young a lady maintained an independent correspondence."

"Yes," said Cuthbert, "her poor dear mother was always an advocate of freedom from restraint; and besides, if the poor child were obliged to write those difficult pattern answers, she would be tired to death—indeed, she can't bear anything of the sort; but when she writes of herself, if she does not spell every word exactly right, still she speaks her own sentiments and opinions. I am a great friend to leaving the mind all free."

"Well, Fanny," said Harriet, rousing her sister from a whispering *tête-à-tête* with her odious Lieutenant, "when you are at leisure, perhaps mamma would like to go to the drawing-room."

"Law, Harry!" said Fanny, blushing, "I am sure I'm ready to go whenever she pleases."

And up they got and away they went. I took Harriet's vacated seat and arranged the bottles.

"Sad accident has happened," said Merman, "to a brother officer of mine, Jukes, of ours. He was riding in the Park the day before yesterday, his horse ran away with him, and threw him, and he has broken his leg and two or three of his ribs. It would be deuced hard if he were to die, for he only purchased his company a fortnight since."

"That's sad work," said Cuthbert; "just give me a little claret, Gilbert—there—thanks. By the way, I don't know if I ever told you of a most formidable-looking accident

that happened to me a vast many years ago, when my poor father and I were travelling in a postchaise down Shooter's Hill, just where the place built like Severndroog is——"

"Bush, pappy!" said Tom, who had watched Cuthbert with considerable anxiety thus far, "you ave told hus that story hevery day this olidays You should ear sister Kate tell it, just for all the world like you——"

"Does she, my boy?" said Cuthbert; "how odd that is! Her poor dear mother had a strong turn for imitation. I didn't remember I had ever told Lieutenant Merman that story,—but wasn't it a miraculous escape?—we *must* have been dashed to pieces, if the horses had not stopped of themselves."

Lieutenant Merman, who evinced by a look at me his perfect intimacy with the catastrophe, then occupied at least three-quarters of an hour in relating a case of great hardship, in which it appeared that a Captain Dobbington had lodged his money for the majority of his regiment, and that Captain Winnowmore had been appointed—and that Lieutenant-colonel Somebody had died—and that the commander of the forces had done Dobbington a great injustice, and so had the adjutant-general, and the quartermaster-general—and so had the secretary at war, and the paymaster of the forces, and the judge advocate-general, and the general commanding the regiment, and, as far as I could collect, the Archbishop of Canterbury. However, Mr. Grub and Mr. Snob, two staunch redressors-general of all human wrongs, were to bring the case before the House of Commons the very first week of the next session, it being one of such importance, that the eyes of the whole army were directed to it, and the feelings of the whole nation in a consequent state of ebullition.

I listened, and at the conclusion of the details said I had not heard anything of it through the public papers; and when I turned to Cuthbert, I found he was fast asleep, with his snuff-box still in his hand, but reversed, as the heralds would say, and the snuff "absent without leave," as the Lieutenant would have said, on the carpet. Not liking to rouse him from the soft slumber in which he was, like another Chrononhotonthologos, "unfatiguing himself," I pushed

the wine again to Merman, who, thinking, I suppose, that my doing so was an encouraging hint to resume his lamentations, continued to enlarge upon the infamous job which had been done, until the slumberer awoke.

Merman's long tale having been quite unfolded, and Cuthbert awakened to the loss of his snuff, I suggested a removal to the drawing-room, anxious, I admit, to see the Minerva under whose fostering auspices two such promising girls as my pseudo-nieces were fast coming to maturity. Cuthbert did not appear to evince any particular desire to greet the lady, which led me to think that his anxiety to show her civility had originated entirely in his devotion to his daughter-in-law. However, having got Lieutenant Merman to ring the bell for Hutton to come and fetch his snuff-box to be refilled, and then to wheel him across the hall to the edge of his couch in the drawing-room, we proceeded to an inspection of the all-accomplished Mrs. Brandyball.

I found her seated on one of the sofas between her young pupils. She was a plumpish dressy woman, of about fifty-four or five, with a florid countenance, and coal-black hair, which, upon the established principle of *meum* and *tuum*, was unquestionably her own; above which she wore a capacious white bonnet, decorated with flowers, which would have made Lee and Kennedy jealous, and have driven Colville mad; chains and rings adorned her neck and fingers, and although *en déshabille* for travelling, she was quite as fine as need be. Upon Cuthbert's arrival, the two girls leaped from the *musnud*, and while Mrs. Brandyball tired him to death with the most affectionate inquiries after his health, Kate stood kissing his forehead and Jane holding one of his hands. After this ceremony had been gone through, Cuthbert looking anxiously after me, pointed to the lady, and said, in a subdued tone of voice, "Gilbert, allow me to introduce Mrs. Brandyball."

I made the *amiable* with the best grace I could, and expressed myself extremely glad to see her at Ashmead,—hoped she had had some refreshment, and suggested that we should have some supper early, since she had missed our dinner-hour by her late arrival.

"Thank you, Mr. Gurney," said my fair friend, in a tone of voice suitable to a girl of sixteen performing on the stage, "for your delicate attention; but I would not for worlds disarrange the economy of your establishment, nor is it in any degree necessary; for owing to the amiable solicitude of these dear children, I have been supplied with every necessary refreshment since my arrival in your charming mansion."

"Have you?" said I; "I am very glad to hear it."

"Yes," continued the lady; "dear Katharine, anxious to evince a regard, which is truly reciprocal, desired the domestics to arrange a little repast in her own apartment, and I found abundance of everything to gratify the appetite, elegantly disposed for my accommodation — interesting creatures! It is most satisfactory to a solicitous preceptress to discover in acts of kindness and consideration like these, the delightful evidence of affection, resulting perhaps in the present instance from a strict adherence to the principle, that where kindness governs in the place of anger, the pupil always receives instruction with gratitude."

This euphonic oration startled me, not only by its manner but its matter. The woman appeared to me to have swallowed half a score of her own copy-books, the examples in which she was now delivering out of her lips: but this being merely ridiculous. I thought I might be amused by her absurdity. What really *did* startle me was the coolness with which the interesting Katharine had given her orders for preparing a snug dinner for her high-flying schoolmistress in *her* room, without inquiring of me or Harriet whether she might do so or not. Nor was this all; for under Hutton's directions, my butler, it seems, had furnished forth wines "of sorts" for the banquet, of which—I speak it with diffidence and reserve—it appeared to me that my fair friend had imbibed no very inconsiderable quantity.

"I have been just expressing to Mrs. Gurney," said Mrs. Brandyball, "the sentiments of admiration which I entertain for the beauties of this vicinage; it was so late when I arrived, that the shades of evening had thrown their mantle over the beauties of Nature; it was, however, impossible not to perceive by the outlines of the surrounding scenery

how very beautiful it must be in a more genial season of the year."

"I think," said I, "you flatter us too much: the country about us is very pretty, but——"

"Oh," said the lady, smiling her best, "*my* opinion is, that courtesy should ever be accompanied with candour; and although 'to err is human, to forgive divine,' as far as I am capable of forming a judgment upon such subjects, I think the drive from the coast hitherwards is quite charming."

"I hope," said I, "that we shall improve your favourable impression during your stay."

"I have explained to Mrs. Gurney," said Mrs. Brandyball, "the cause of my somewhat premature appearance here. I really entertain so sincere a regard—I might almost denominate it a maternal affection—for these two dear creatures, that I ventured in some measure to overstep the ordinary regulations of society by accepting my dear Katharine's invitation; but, as I say, affectation is at best but a deformity, and conciliatory manners command esteem—so that when the dear girl wrote to beg me to come, I came without reflecting how much perhaps I ventured to intrude."

I bowed—though it was evident that Kitty, in the course of the second dinner in what this eloquent lady called *her* apartment, had explained to her the whole of the manœuvre which had failed, with regard to the invitation which was to have been sent to her

"Oh, Mr. Gurney" continued the lady, "'a good education is the foundation of happiness, and ignorance is the parent of many injuries,' and this I say, because a good maxim is never out of season. Now I have had these dear creatures under my care for five years, nay, more—the course of Time is so rapid, and I may say so imperceptible, in fact like the varied movements of the vast universe, that one is unconscious of its flight—and I declare that I never have had the smallest reason to find fault with either of them—as I say, perfect idleness is perfect weariness, and of all prodigality that of time is the worst. Defer not till to-morrow what you can do to-day; indeed I find lazy folks take the most pains—but I do assure you that my two young charges appear to me to possess a felicitous mixture of talent and

genius, with a desire to improve their natural advantages by a sedulous devotion to the more abstruse studies."

Studies, thought I—of quadrupeds running about upon the ceiling, with a great many legs—or of geography, sailing into an Asiatic Mediterranean through Behring's Straits—however, I saw what my florid, black-haired lady *was*, in a moment, and felt not the slightest indisposition to amuse myself with the animal *rouge et noir*. Besides, as Cuthbert and the people he called his children were to be pleased by any attention paid to our newly-arrived guest, I resolved to put a good face on the matter, convinced that the fine language of my new friend was only plating, and that after a day or two we should scrape our way to the real material.

I was somewhat relieved from the overflow of Mrs. Brandyball's loquacity by Harriet, who, I suppose, saw that I had enough of it—to use a phrase which the euphonic lady never would have adopted, and who came to remind me that Cuthbert was looking wistfully for his whist—the hint was enough; and I began to make up his little party by inquiring if Mrs. Brandyball would like to cut in.

"No, my dear sir," said the fascinating Hedgehog; "I invariably decline card-playing. Malice never wants a mark to shoot at; and, although regarding the subject with an unprejudiced eye, I see really no mortal interdiction to such relaxation, I think it better not to gratify myself by an amusement which the rigid might censure: I feel it is always right to comply with cheerfulness where necessity enjoins; so, as every condition has its troubles, I give up upon principle what might, in the estimation of the liberal portion of mankind, be considered little else than a relief from mental labour."

The effort she made to decline the whist was as palpable as that which an ill-bred child makes to say, "No, I thank you," when asked to eat or drink something which he or she particularly wishes for, but has been taught by some vulgar person to refuse as a matter of delicacy.

Mrs. Wells and I played against Cuthbert and Harriet; Merman of course "sat out" with Fanny; and Mrs. Brandyball enjoyed herself amazingly with the two girls, who sat on either side of her soaking their hands in hers.

This was dull work for the new arrival, I presume; but luckily for all parties, Sniggs dropped in to look at Tom's wounds, which were very parliamentarily divided between the eyes and nose. When he came half stepping half bounding into the room, the vivacious Brandyball seemed quite astounded. I heard Kitty put her to rights in a moment, "The apothecary," said Kate; and immediately Brandyball drew herself up, and looked hatchets and carving-knives at him.

"Been to see Master Tom," said Sniggs, who had visited the lout in his room, to which he had been conveyed under the orders of his sister, who had no desire to be bored with his society after the arrival of her governess, although she would have so much missed his company at dinner. "All going on well—slight discolouration—gone by to-morrow—pulse good—tongue clean—everything as it should be—shocking affair, Mr. Gurney—have you heard?—Hawkins the buttermilk has bolted off to America—always suspicious—martyr to hepatitis—wife pretty woman—attended her in four of her confinements—fine family—troubled a little with rheumatism—sitting in the parlour with her back to the key-hole—has cheated everybody—poor Sims at the Crown is a great loser—bad for him—short neck—determination of blood to the head last Easter—twenty leeches to his temples—brought him round, but no accounting for sudden shocks."

"You have ruffed, or roughed (for I don't know now it is to be spelt) my thirteenth," said Cuthbert to Harriet, who was his partner. The word ruff, or rough, as the case may be, being, as I have discovered, synonymous with trump. As for Harriet, she hated whist, pretty much, perhaps, for the same reason that I do,—because I do not understand it;—nor would I take the trouble, if I thought I could succeed in the pursuit to its attainment, or devote my time and intellect to a game which no man ought ever to play, except for amusement, because when learned to the best of one's ability it necessarily involves the fate and fortune, if it be played for money, of a partner.

Harriet was quite shocked at the earnestness with which Cuthbert charged her with this high crime and misdemeanour; nor

pleased when Cuthbert added, "Well, I should think, considering your father is a parson, he might have taught you better." This observation set Mrs. Brandyball into a loud fit of laughing, and put me into something very like a rage; but then it was my brother who made the remark, and he was lively, and facetious, and therefore better than usual; and so I shuffled and sorted my cards, and tried to think of the principle of the game which I was playing, but in which most assuredly I took no interest.

I had hoped, when my brother had exerted himself sufficiently to scold my poor little wife about the unfortunate mistake, that there would have been an end. But no; when the hand was out, Cuthbert, with a gravity far beyond that which the importance of the affair seemed to require, said—"Harriet, dear, see what that mistake of yours has done; if in the second round of clubs, you had played your nine instead of your seven, Gilbert's eight would have fallen: and then, when you saw me lead the knave of diamonds through your mother's king, your putting a trump on it was madness; besides, when you had the lead, if you had returned me the spade, which I had shown you in the very first round was my strong suit, we should have got three tricks running, and then I could have returned you the heart, which must have made two more, because you had ace, king, which, as it was, fell to their trumps."

Harriet listened to the lecture patiently, but profited little. I listened, but not patiently. Poor Cuthbert was perfectly serious, and really out of sorts; he was worth a hundred and fifty thousand pounds, and we were playing sixpenny points.

Harriet got tired,—perhaps the scolding did not do her good,—but she was rapidly approaching the period of her confinement, and I saw that she turned pale, and gave me more than one look of exhaustion and weariness; but it would have been treason to deprive Cuthbert of his prescribed three rubbers, so she played on, and Cuthbert was so keen a player for nothings that he would not allow Harriet and me to play together.

"No," said he, "never, never let man and wife play together at whist." It is too much trouble for me to point out

all the things they do ; but my dear Gilbert, there are alway family telegraphs, and if they fancy their looks are watched they communicate by words. My good fellow," continued he, looking as white as a sheet, and wholly exhausted by the exertion, "at Bungalapumbungabad, up the country where I was carried in my palkee to get somebody to look at some indigo which I wanted to buy, I met with a Mr. Smigsmag and his wife.—nice woman, upon my word,—I did not cultivate their acquaintance much, because he lived more than half a mile from my bungalow, and I was merely a visiter, —but I dined with him once or twice, and we played whist ; and his wife and *he* always played together : —ho, dear ! Kitty, give me the eau de Cologne, dear,—isn't she grown, Mrs. Brandyball, eh?—and so—I found out that I never could win against Smigsmag and his wife, —he was a Burrah Saab—a resident—excellent man in his way ;—and so, one night I mentioned this to my friend who played with me, and who, being an expectant creature, was obliged to make up their table when asked—I, you know, had nothing to do with John Company, and didn't care a cawrie for all Leadenhall-street put together,—and he said (in confidence of course) to me—' You never *can* win of them.' ' Why ?' said I. ' Because,' said he, ' they have established a code.' ' Dear me !' said I ; ' what signals by looks ?' ' No,' said he ; ' by words. If Mrs. Smigsmag is to lead, Smigsmag says, " Dear begin." Dear begins with D, so does diamond, and out comes a diamond from the lady. If *he* has to lead, and she says " S., my love, play," she wants a spade. Smigsmag and spade begin with the same letter, and, sure enough, down comes a spade. " Harriet, my dear," says Smigsmag, " how long you are sorting your cards." Mrs. Smigsmag stumps down a heart and a gentle " Come, my love," on either side, infallibly produces a club.' I can't stand these family comedies, Gilbert."

I was delighted to find Cuthbert equal to so much exertion as was required in telling this story, which produced an observation from Sniggs that whatever the Smigsmags gained by tricks, they could not make much by their honours. At which Galenic effusion Mrs. Brandyball fell

into a fit of laughter, and little Jane, who did not understand in the slightest degree what it meant, shook her flaxen curls like a newly-washed poodle.

"I am sorry," said Harriet to Cuthbert, "that you have so bad an opinion of *us*; I never should have thought of such a scheme."

"But," said Sniggs, "like the ostler and the priest, now you have been told how the matter *may* be managed, perhaps you will avail yourselves of the information."

"No," said Cuthbert, "I don't suspect them. As for myself, I could not take the trouble to recollect what letter the names of the different suits begin with."

"Shall I," said Mrs. Brandyball, "relieve you from the exertion of arranging your cards? Allow me: many hands make light work. Every condition has its troubles; without a friend the world is a wilderness!"

Saying which, the officious lady sorted Cuthbert's hand for him, and resumed her place at his side, Katherine sitting on his left; and in this fashion we went through the prescribed rubbers, just before the conclusion of which the servants prepared a "tray" in the anteroom, which Sniggs invariably called "an excellent *trait* in our character!" and round which, I must confess, our little party has frequently enjoyed more sociable mirth than it has partaken of during the whole of the day. Sniggs eyed the arrangements with evident satisfaction, and Mrs. Brandyball turned her head, almost instinctively, to the quarter in which the rattling of glasses announced the approach of some agreeable liquid. Merman and Fanny needed neither eatables nor drinkables; they were living upon themselves, in a distant corner of the room, feeling immeasurably happy, and looking inconceivably ridiculous. When the last rubber was ended, much to my relief, not more on my own account than of poor dear Harriet, Cuthbert desired Jane to ring the bell for Hutton, who was wanted to wheel him into his room, in order that his hands and face might be washed with rose-water—an ablution which he seemed to consider indispensably necessary at that period of the evening.

Having broken up from our play, I found Kate and Jane still remaining fixtures for supper. However, as it was

the night of Mrs. Brandyball's arrival—and her arrival at all was matter of compliment to their indulgent father-in-law—there was nothing in *that*, only they had not been in the habit of staying up to supper. Cuthbert, having been washed and refreshed, was wheeled back; and we closed round the table, I, with our new guest on my right hand, and my mother-in-law on my left. Sniggs sat on Harriet's right, Cuthbert on her left, with Kitty of course on *his* right. I had often heard Sniggs talk of the unwholesomeness of suppers; and as often seen him eat voraciously of them, as, indeed, many men who have at other times small appetites, *will*. Dr. Franklin was one of Snigg's favourite authors in the way of reference: and as I thought that nothing could be better than bringing the printer to bear upon the 'pothecary, I went to my library for five minutes before Cuthbert's return, and "read up," for an attack upon our Galen, if he should begin his customary depredations upon our eatables. There he was, sure enough, "pegging away," as we used to say in my horrid school-days, at cold fowl, salmagundi, roasted oysters, and finishing with a *piquante* bit of devilled turkey.

"Well, Doctor," said — (for a brevet degree in a country-place like Blissford is all fair), "I see you do not exactly practise as you preach."

"None of us do," said Sniggs. "When I was in town last, I dined with three physicians of the starving school, and two surgeons sworn to the Abernethian doctrine. I never saw five men eat or drink so much in the whole course of my life; and, Mr. Gurney," added my Lampedo, go where you will, watch the faculty, and you will find them the greatest gormandizers in the empire."

"Yes," said I, "at dinner, perhaps, but not at supper; recollect what your idol Franklin says:" and then I came out with my quotation. "In general, mankind, since the improvement of cookery, eat about twice as much as nature requires. Suppers are not bad, if we have not dined; but restless nights naturally follow hearty suppers after full dinners. Indeed, as there is a difference in constitutions, some rest well after these meals; it costs them only a frightful dream and an apoplexy, after which they sleep till dooms-

day. Nothing is more common in the newspapers than instances of people who, after eating a hearty supper, are found dead a-bed in the morning.'"

"Correctly quoted by you, sir," said Sniggs; "and aptly observed by the Doctor; but suppose, now, I was to tell you that I have had no dinner—fact.—Three hours at Mrs. Humbleman's—case of asthma—bad breathing—great distress—husband wouldn't let me leave her. He himself dyspeptic, with a slight disposition to erysipelas. Mrs. Sniggs did not wait for me—I away to Stephenson the watchmaker's little girl—second—nice child—scarlatina—fancied measles—I with her—cup of black tea, weak, and with dry toast, all I had—here to look at Master Falwasser's dear little nose. What could I do? so I only make up the former deficiency of diet."

"It must," said Mrs. Brandyball, "be exceedingly exciting to witness the various afflictions of the different domestic circles to which you are professionally invoked. Experience is the mother of science; and prevention is better than cure. However, the longest day must have an end; and you must experience a most gratifying sensation when you return to repose, to think that, perhaps, under Providence, you have been the means of restoring a dear child to a fond parent—for even the crow thinks its own bird the fairest; and greatness of mind is ever compassionate."

Sniggs, who was not particularly sentimental, and thought more of his pills and bills than of any other thing in the world, looked at our new friend with an expression of countenance which I thought rather equivocal, the character of which was changed into the broad comic when he perceived her sip somewhat largely from a tumbler, into which she had previously poured some particularly strong brandy, which, it must be admitted, took her by surprise.

Harriet looked at me, and I looked at her; and we both laughed. I am sure I had no notion why. However, as we *had* laughed, I thought it was quite absolutely necessary to atone for the indiscretion by an extra show of attention; and therefore begged to recommend to her particular notice a cup which the servant had just brought in and put down; and in which there was something which I thought she would

prefer, since it was evident she was a judge. The mixture which I advocated was a peculiar sort of punch, really not strong, but rich and agreeable; and which even Cuthbert, if anybody would take the trouble to pour it out for him, would not object to imbibe.

"Thank you Mr. Gurney," said the lady, "it is never too late to learn; and although I seldom indulge in such combinations, your kindness is such that I find it quite impossible to resist your delicate attentions. I *will* have one glass."

The tumbler was returned, the lady sipped, and smiled, and sipped again: her eyes approved, even before her tongue had spoken.

"I fear," said Mrs. Brandyball, "the delightful weather which we have been enjoying during the last few days is drawing to a close. The moon's envelopment in that silvery mist augurs an approaching change, and threatens an accession of cadent humidity."

"Isn't that mist," said Kitty, "what the astrologers call a hayloft?"

This was fatal. Cuthbert, who was in a nap, with Kate's arm round his neck, heard it not. Merman was leaning his head on his hand, with his nose within three inches of Fanny's mouth, and heeded it not; but the eyes of Mrs. Wells, Harriet, Sniggs and myself met. What to do was the doubt of a moment: the struggle was ineffectual, and we burst into a fit of loud laughter. Mrs. Brandyball stared, Merman and Fanny were flurried, Kate tittered, and Cuthbert awoke.

CHAPTER IV.

It seemed useless to attempt anything like a restoration of order or tranquillity after this explosion about the astrologer and the hay-loft, and equally impossible to explain to Cuthbert, when he was awakened into consciousness, what had actually occurred; and accordingly Harriet, with an expressive look at

me, rose from the table, not exactly as if wishing anybody else to follow her example, but at the same time fully expecting that her move would produce an adjournment—nor was she wrong; for our fair visiter, not exactly knowing the rules and regulations of the family, which were rather lax in the particular of “early to bed and early to rise,” immediately quitted her seat—having, however, first finished her last tumbler of what in common parlance was remarkably strong punch. Kitty, who clung about her with what appeared to me a parasitical affectation of affection, said to her in a tone ill suited, as I thought, to her time of life and position in society—

“Oh, don’t go, dear, yet—have another glass. I’m sure it will do you good.”

“No, dearest,” said Mrs. Brandyball, with one of her angelic smiles; “I always attend to the dictates of prudence. The draught is nectareous, but time wears on, and dear Mrs. Gurney is already fatigued.”

“Yes, but,” said Kitty, “you know you always have three or four glasses at home.”

“Never mind, dear love,” said Mrs. Brandyball, looking furious, endeavouring to free herself from the girl’s embrace, and evidently wishing her—where, it might not be quite decorous here to mention.

The ladies retired; Mrs. Wells had gone home some time before, Wells having sent the carriage for her from the rectory after it had set him down: which violation of his promise to join us after the early dinner-party broke up, I, perhaps uncharitably, attributed to a want of the forbearance which Mrs. Brandyball had recently exhibited. The adieux of the children and Cuthbert occupied nearly a quarter of an hour, and during their progress Kate enumerated all the places which she would lionise in the morning with her dear governess; and having liberally detailed the programme of the performance, completely upset me by telling *her* visiter that it would take at least a week to see all the things worth seeing in the neighbourhood.

I must do Mrs. Brandyball the justice to say that she endeavoured, or seemed to endeavour, to moderate the energy of her fair pupil; and by mingling with her smiles,

approving of the proposition, sundry deferential looks towards Harriet, who stood "pageing her heels" while the animated Miss Falwasser enlarged upon the loveliness of the coast, and the beauty of the drives, contrived to convey very evidently her feeling that the whole of the young lady's arrangements were subject to the controul and permission of the lady of the house.

"Very nice amiable woman," said Cuthbert, after the party had left the room; "so natural—eh—so unaffected."

Sniggs and I exchanged looks.

"What remarkably fine hair she has," said Sniggs, somewhat theatrically, sipping his third glass of punch. Cuthbert did not see the point of Galen's observation, which conveyed to my mind and that of Merman (who waited to walk home with the apothecary) all he meant it should, as regarded what the Lakers would call the "universality of her naturalness." In fact, my poor brother was of so easy a disposition, and so much readier to admit than dispute, that it never once entered his head that the ringlets which wantoned over Mrs. Brandyball's forehead were other than indigenous; and as neither Sniggs nor myself felt at all desirous to mar the serenity with which he seemed inclined to view all the schoolmistress's perfections, or fatigue him with a discussion upon the peculiar merits of the "soft illusion" with which she contrived to set off her somewhat matured charms, we allowed him to continue in his state of credulous blessedness, from which it would have been downright barbarity to disturb him.

"Will any one tell me what o'clock it is?" said Cuthbert. "It is almost time for bed—dear, dear—what a deal of trouble one takes in getting up and going to sleep—it is always the same thing over and over again. Just do me the kindness to ring the bell—thank you—that—ah—is not that my pocket-handkerchief on the floor?—yes, thank you—oh, Hutton, are you there?—well—ah—it's only to wheel me to my room. Good night, good night, Sniggs—no fear about Tom's eye—eh?"

"None in the least, sir," said Sniggs.

"Have you thought any more of what I got Hutton to write to you about?" said Cuthbert. "Kitty s -bone

—I forgot to talk to you about it—you'll be here to-morrow—come soon, and if you have time, we'll have one game of chess before luncheon. Good night, Gilbert—good night, Mr.—psha—dear—Mr. Merman.”

And away was he wheeled—having again invited Sniggs to chess and, *par conséquence*, to luncheon. Well! I cannot help it; I suppose it must be so.

“Come Sniggs,” said I, “let us finish the jug.”

“What!” said Sniggs, “you are in the jugular vein to-night, sir.”

I laughed, and should have laughed more if Sniggs had not made the same wretched pun a hundred times before. Merman did not see any joke in it, but talked of ringing for his great coat, inasmuch as it was desperately cold in the hall, and he had a cough, and Fanny desired him to take care of himself. I rang the bell, and the coat and cloak were brought, and my guests packed up for departure. I shook hands with both; as Merman was leaving the room he turned suddenly back, and said,

“Do you expect me at dinner to-morrow?”

Now I ask the best tactician in the world what answer I could give to such a question but that which I did?

“Too happy to see you.”

That I was sincere in saying so, I cannot assert; and yet the invitation, or rather the admission, to my house was sincerely offered. I have already said I disliked Merman; but those who were loved by those whom I loved, were fond of him and enjoyed his society; so that although, as directly relating to Merman and myself, that which I said was not true—still, as affecting the pleasure and amusement of others upon whom my regards were reflected from her who was all the world to me, I conscientiously said that I should be happy to see him. “For *their* sakes” was the mental reservation. However, as he *was* to come, and I could not hope to enjoy my much-desired domestic meal while Mrs Brandyball stayed, I resolved upon having Wells of the party, and accordingly begged Merman, who would in all probability see him before I should in the morning, to ask him to join us; still, I admit wondering to myself how the reverend gentleman came to permit the

affair of Fanny and the Lieutenant to linger on so long without coming to a decision. *My* case had been settled in a fifth part of the time, although I had never—at least I do not think I ever had—made any such manifestations of devotion to Harriet as the Lieutenant has been exhibiting during the last four or five months.

This circumstance brought to my mind the often-repeated axiom of my reverend friend with regard to early marriages, even without the actual possession of fortune, and the singular concatenation of circumstances by which, in my own case, his anticipations, *couleur de rose*, had been realized; and *that* again brought to my recollection a most ungenerous and ungracious comparison on *my* part between the actual state of my present circumstances, and the probabilities of what would have occurred if I had missed my brother on the day of his return, or if, by any unforeseen circumstances, he had lost the fortune he possessed; in which case Harriet and I should have been living upon a much more moderate scale than we now are,—I, in some way, labouring to increase my income, and perhaps doing something to obtain a reputation, as well as profit. To have contented myself under such circumstances would have been wise and philosophical; and there was nothing wrong or uncourteous in instituting such a comparison; the ungraciousness and the ungenerousness of the process applied only to the conclusion at which I arrived, that, although I might have kept two servants instead of seven or eight, my wife would have had no carriage; and my table would have been less amply covered; that my house would have been small, instead of large; and that I should have toiled, instead of trifled; I should have been independent. I could have sat down quietly with my nice, kind, good-humoured Harriet, have enjoyed that ingenuous interchange of thoughts and opinions, which is the charm of domestic life, and if I had had beyond enough, a little to spare, I might at least have chosen the friend who should be our guest.

Now this is all wrong. It makes me think I have a bad heart; that I am ungrateful to Cutlibert. No, I am not; but with all his kindness to *me*, with all my affection for *him*.

I am not happy,—I am not at my ease. Then—it sounds most unfraternal to think of it—he said he should go to Cheltenham long before dear Harriet's accouchment; and I begged him not to leave us. I suppose that may be the reason why he seems to have abandoned the intention altogether; and now I am sorry he does not mean to go: we should be quieter during her illness: but still I ought not to wish him to leave Ashmead, if he is happier where he is; what I really do think is, that he would be more amused at Cheltenham than he can possibly be with us; especially during the period of her confinement.

The Nubleys are gone to town to-day; he is reduced to Sniggs; Wells is too vivacious for him; his mind cannot travel fast enough to catch Wells's jokes and anecdotes. However, if he is comfortable, why we owe him everything; and, pah!—I will not worry myself with thinking about it. I will bear all the little rubs I meet with, patiently and properly, and keep my temper; or, perhaps, as my temper seems to be at present by no means good, change it as soon as possible. How is it possible, with the strongest possible fraternal feelings, to maintain this equanimity?

When I went to bed—yes, there it is—to bed—Harriet, who had not been particularly comfortable during the evening, and, poor dear soul, felt Cuthbert's rebuke about the whist, and Kitty's pre-eminence in everything more deeply than, perhaps, was necessary, told me that she proposed, after breakfast next day, to drive over with Fanny in the pony phaeton to call on a Mrs. Somerton, a great friend of the Wells's, who had come on a visit at Hallowden, within about five miles of us. Harriet had always a persuasive way with her, and, dear love, it required very little effort on my part to make the arrangement, that she should drive Fanny, or Fanny her, to this place. All that I apprehended was, that she might over-exert herself. However, she laughed kindly at my solicitude, and said that, not only she was sure the drive would do her good, but that she was most anxious to show whatever civility she might to this Mrs. Somerton, because,—what, I did not want to hear—it was something connected with her family, and why should I argue further? And so, before taking my last turn round

to sleep, I told her, poor dear, to order her phaeton when she chose, and to invite Mrs. Somerton to come to us, if she liked ; and so I dropped into my slumber, quite satisfied that that matter was finally arranged.

At breakfast Cuthbert did not appear ; he had got a pain in his side ; and Hutton had told him he had better not get up, and so he desired Hutton, when Mr. Sniggs came, to send him to his room. Harriet received Mrs. Brandyball with all her wonted good nature ; and Mrs. Brandyball was more elegant and refined than ever. Kitty *had* breakfasted, so had Jane, but still they were supporters to their governess's arms, and were, as usual, on her dexter and sinister side. Tom was proscribed, much to my delight ; Kitty having denounced him as not presentable with a piece of plaister on his face, cut diagonally, and stuck over his mouth like a hatchment over a window. Mrs. Brandyball seemed to enjoy her breakfast ; she ate eggs, broiled ham, and *gibier au gratin*, tasted of absent Cuthbert's curry, admired the way in which the rice was served dry, ventured upon one rognon, extremely well served, (although without Champagne), and concluded her matutinal meal with the upper half of a peculiar sort of buttered cake, for which my cook was really famous, not only in the modern fal-lal acceptance of the word, in which good wine, of which nobody ever heard is called famous, or a well-sized room, or a well-formed horse, is designated by the same adjective ; but because she (for it was a she) was really famous in the neighbourhood for her excellence in contriving a delusive, delicious, and destructive compound of something that seemed light and melting in the mouth, but which was in fact of the heaviest and most indigestible order ; and which when well saturated with butter, was at once one of the most agreeable, and most dreadful things ever invented, always excepting a before-mentioned Shrapnell shell, or a Congreve rocket.

I looked at my bonny Brandyball as she fed, as I had been wont to look, as a boy, at Garnerin's balloons, when the method of filling them was much more tedious and expensive than it afterwards became ; and my feeling—save and except that the *matériel* was my own—was not very

dissimilar from that which I had upon those occasions experienced; for although the process went on with what appeared to me most admirable success, I could perceive no visible effect, nor the slightest disposition on her part to *rise*, although we had all long concluded our operations in the way of feeding.

Everything however must have an end, and so at length had our breakfast; and then came the awkward dawdling time in which people huddled about the fire, or go into corners to write letters, or begin to make plans for the day's amusement, and I betook myself to my library, where, even in the present state of domestic disarrangement, I had still a shelter and retreat,—which, however, I might not have so securely retained, if I had not adopted the precaution of keeping the door closed, not only when I was out of the room, but when I was in it, by means of what Sniggs facetiously called my “Lock upon the Human Understanding,” the key of which never left my pocket.

This sounds illiberal and churlish; but I love books dearly. I venerate them; and it pains my heart, and grieves my sight, to see them ill-treated. If the Miss Falwassers and their brother had free access to my library, a week would not elapse before every volume which had “*pictures*” in it, would be lugged out of its place, rumpled, strained backwards, thumbled, and tumbled; my portfolios would be emptied; and if their contents were replaced, their edges would be cut with the strings destined for their preservation,—for as to reading, the boy, I believe, cannot compass the performance, and the girls would inevitably take but one line, and rejecting as dull and nonsensical all the sterling works in our language, whence they might derive instruction and improvement, mount my fairy ladder, to reach from the top shelves, to which they have been banished, the plays and novels which have come into my possession, either as presentation copies from their authors, or as alloy to some valuable lot which I have bought at an auction.

From my place of refuge I did not emerge until luncheon was announced, at which I presented myself, and found, as I did not expect (for I had forgotten the arrangement), Sniggs and Cuthbert apparently asleep over the chess-board,

the only sign of life or liveliness betrayed by either of them being a very subdued noise made by Cuthbert in the way of whistling his one only tune, which was the air of a song in, or rather out of a farce called "My Grandmother;" the burden of which is composed of these words—

"'Tis a favour, sir, I must deny, oh fie!"

More of the song I never heard, nor do I know what might have been the favour denied by the lady who sings, nor why she should exclaim "Oh fie!" All I do know is, that this one line, either whistled or sung, but almost always whistled, in the softest possible tone, was Cuthbert's universal practice at all times when he had occasion to do what he called think.

"Good morning, sir," said Sniggs: "fine day—healthy invigorating weather."

"Ah, Gilbert," said Cuthbert, "how d'ye do, my dear fellow? Well, I don't see how that queen is to be got out of check. Tom is quite well, Gilbert,—so Sniggs says."

"Quite," said Sniggs; "not a mark of a bruise to be seen."

"Poor fellow!" said Cuthbert, and then a little whistle.

"I'll finish this game after luncheon."

"Where's Mrs. Brandyball?" said I.

"Oh," said Cuthbert, "she is gone with Kate and Jane to the Rectory. I told them they would get some luncheon there, and, as the day was so fine, I thought they might show their governess the park, and so come round by Hansford, and look at the view from Fellsbury Hill. I recollect the day you got me there, I was quite delighted with the prospect."

"But," said I, "they will be tired to death: why, my dear Cuthbert, the route you have given them is little less than nine miles."

"Well, my dear fellow," said Cuthbert, "what's that?—nothing."

"I think," said I, "if you had to walk nine miles, you would consider it something." Cuthbert.

"Ay," said my brother, "to walk, I grant you. I should as soon think of walking to Jerusalem, as Parson Whall did in my father's time; but, for horses—and norses

have not too much work at any time—it is only wholesome exercise.”

“Horses!” said I; “what horses have they got?”

“They have got the phaeton,” said Cuthbert. “I told Hutton to tell the coachman to get it ready for them; and Kate drives, you know, remarkably well,—and the ponies are so quiet,—and she is so fond of driving,—not that I should let her drive horses that were not perfectly quiet. I’m sure since that day when I and my father were coming along the road by Shooter’s Hill, where that place like Severndroog is built——”

“Yes,” said I, interrupting somewhat more sharply than was my wont, seeing that I was both vexed and angry: “but, my dear Cuthbert, Harriet wanted the phaeton to go and call on a Mrs. Somebody at Hallowden,—a remarkably pretty drive,—in which she meant to invite Mrs. Brandyball to accompany her;—she had made a point of going to-day, and I concluded had ordered the carriage.”

“No, sir,” said Hutton, who was wheeling his master to the luncheon-table, “the carriage was not ordered when my master sent me to see about it. Mrs. Gurney sent down since, but then the young ladies were gone.”

I could not trust myself with any remark, so I took the prudent course of leaving the room, and going in search of Harriet, whom I found in her boudoir, looking exactly as cheerful and unconcerned as if no liberty had been taken with her rights and privileges, and she had not been disappointed in her drive, and frustrated in her civil intentions towards both Mrs. Somerton and our volunteer guest.

“It was *my* fault, dear,” said Harriet; “I forgot to order the phaeton after breakfast, and——”

“That may be, Harry,” said I; “but what I complain of is, that anybody here should forget to ask your leave before *they* ordered it.”

“Oh, never mind,” said Harriet. “The day is not so fine as it was, and perhaps it will rain and perhaps I might have caught cold; besides, the girls are so very fond of their schoolmistress, and it amuses her, and I can go another day.”

“You are a dear, kind, good soul, Harriet,” said I; “but

you must not, and shall not be overlooked and degraded in your own house. The carriage and horses are yours, and——”

“So they are, love,” said Harriet; “but it was cousin Cuthbert who gave them to me. Recollect *that*, dear Gilbert; recollect how much we owe him.”

“I do, Harriet dear,” said I; “and, as far as I can judge, it is not likely that I shall very soon be permitted to forget it. However, a gift, to be valuable, or even receivable, must be complete; and the moment he presented you with that carriage, all his interest in, and controul over it, ceased and determined.”

“My dear Gilbert,” said Harriet, “what you are now saying must be something you learned in the Temple, when they were going to make a lawyer of you. Never let us cherish an unkindly thought towards kind Cuthbert. I believe sometimes Kitty’s pertness and Tom’s rudeness flurried me a little. I feel angry and vexed at times,—angry that I am vexed, and vexed that I am angry. But all this is temporary; a few more days, and quiet will be restored.”

“Where is Fanny?” said I.

“Why, Fanny is gone home,” said Harriet. “Papa has sent for her; but he brings her back to dinner. I don’t exactly know but I rather think her visit to the Rectory has something to do with the affair of your friend Lieutenant Merinan. I don’t know, because papa’s note merely begs her to come home; but I cannot understand what else could have required her presence.”

“I think,” said I, “it is quite time something should be done decisively in that business. I admit that I never liked him since——”

“I remember the moment right well,” said Harriet: “it was when I was foolish and Missy enough to try and make you jealous of him,—wasn’t that the time? and isn’t that the cause of your disinclination from him? I know it is. But you have forgiven *me*.”

“Yes, dear, yes,” said I. “Forgiven you?—to be sure I have, and forgotten the whole affair,”—which, in truth, I had not, nor any one incident that ever occurred during my unconscious courtship of my darling wife.

It is curious how the minutest circumstances are registered in the mind, with which the object of our affections is in any degree connected. I remember, as well as if it were but yesterday, while walking with Harriet and her father, and her little sister, in their gay and blooming garden, I gathered a beautiful half-budded rose. I placed it in the button-hole of my coat and walked on, talking as we had been talking before, nor was it till my eyes rested for a moment on those of Harriet, that I felt a conviction of my selfishness, and a consciousness that she had expected I was gathering it for *her*, and that she had been disappointed when I appropriated it to myself. Now, absurd as it may seem, although I never have so far betrayed my weakness as to mention this trifling circumstance to her, I never, to this moment, think of it without regret and discontent.

"Come to luncheon, dear," said I. "Cuthbert is there, and I left him somewhat abruptly; for I was vexed."

"Gilbert, dearest," said Harriet, leaning on my arm, and looking in my face with an ingenuousness neither to be affected nor mistaken, "never, never be vexed about anything in which I am concerned. Believe me, I am too happy to make your happiness; and as for all this matter, what does it signify whether I went to-day to make my visit, or go to-morrow? Promise me, dear love, to let nothing of this sort put you the least out of the way."

Could I help kissing her white forehead, and pressing her to my heart? I think I should have gone the length of kissing her rosy lips too, had not her maid come into the room at the moment, to say that Mr. Cuthbert had sent up word by Hutton that he and Mr. Sniggs were waiting for us. There it was again!—not even master of five minutes. Mr. Sniggs, indeed!

"Come, then, dear," said I to Harriet; and down stairs we went: and there we found the late antagonists making common cause in a servile war upon some grilled and minced fowl, Cuthbert having, under medical advice, fallen to, lest he should lose the appetite which the smell of the *diablerie* of my ingenious cook had excited. The sight of luncheon immediately brought to my mind the peculiar awkwardness of Mrs. Brandyball's appearance at the Rectory, with her

two sparkling satellites, on a morning which, from what Harriet had told me, seemed to be "big with the fate of Merman and of Fan." While I was helping dear Harriet to "the least bit of cold chicken in the world," the servant brought me a note. I opened and read it. Its contents were, to me, convincing that I had not mistaken my Lieutenant. I threw it across the table to Harriet, who ran her eyes over it, and returned it, saying only, "Well," which I myself have a habit of saying upon many occasions when it would not be well to say anything more. The contents of the note were these lines:—

"DEAR SIR.—I regret that a compulsory visit to London this afternoon will prevent my having the pleasure of dining with you to-day, as I had proposed.

"Yours. very truly,

"J. MERMAN."

"That's odd, Harry," said I, as I jerked off the wing of the chicken.

"Yes," said Harriet, "very odd, indeed, considering."

"I am not sorry," said I, cutting her the thinnest imaginable slice of ham, "even if it be as I suppose from *this*."

"I am," replied my wife, "for her sake."

"It is for *her* sake," answered I, "that I am not."

"Is that an invitation?" said Cuthbert.

"No," said I; "on the contrary, a refusal of one."

"Oh!" continued he; "because I hear that some lady—I *did* hear her name, but, ah dear! I forget—is going to give a juvenile fancy ball, and I was going to ask if you knew her—Hutton can't tell me—because I think my little girls would—ah, would like to go, if they were invited."

"There is to be a thing of the sort," said Sniggs, "at Mrs. Trigley's, I believe. Tall woman, in a green bonnet—sits opposite the churchwardens—amiable person—subject to jaundice—had a slight touch of epilepsy about four years since—nice house for the purpose—bad aspect—dampish, I take it—rather troubled with sciatica."

"And when is this to be?" said I.

"I think in about a fortnight," said Sniggs.

"We don't know her," said Harriet.

"I think," said Cuthbert, "Bessy Wells told Kate that the Wells' know her, and so I said, if she could manage it, she and Jane might go; and Kate *was* saying something of having a little thing of the sort here. I believe Mr Kittington, the dancing-master, put it into her head first;—of course these people are anxious to show off their pupils to the best advantage."

I could not stand this, so I made no reply; but only said "Well" again, as Harriet had said before, and drank a glass of wine. I saw Harriet looked worried and vexed at Merman's note, which it was clear to me she considered the *avant courier* of some unpleasant family news. She was evidently engrossed with her own thoughts, and left us as soon as she possibly could.

There is something like prescience, something intuitively quick about women when matters connected with these *affaires de cœur* come under their notice. It might, to be sure, have been, in this instance, that Fanny had made her sister to a certain degree her confidante. What struck me was, that my reverend father-in-law had been drawing matters to a conclusion with the Lieutenant, but having chosen the morning rather than the evening for the conference, the result had not been quite so successful as that of our winding-up conversation upon a probably similar topic. Fanny returned to Ashmead between four and five o'clock, and hurried unseen to Harriet's sanctum, and when I saw my poor little wife again, I saw she had been crying. She begged me to excuse her to Mrs. Brandyball for her absence from dinner, on the plea of indisposition—the fact being, that she and Fanny intended to devote the rest of the day to talk over the important events of the morning.

Mrs. Brandyball returned alone in the carriage—the independent Kate having accepted for herself and her sister an invitation from Bessy Wells to stay at the Rectory and pass the evening, which could be perfectly well managed, and without any inconvenience, inasmuch as they could come home in the carriage which would be sent to fetch the Rector, who was to dine with us. Our fair guest was profuse in her expressions of admiration of the neighbourhood, of the Rectory, of the Wells's, of my horses, of my

phaeton, of Kitty's driving, and, in short, of everything in any way connected with us ; for it struck me that her great object was to "butter" Cuthbert, to whom she looked up as a patron at least ; nor was I without some slight suspicion that in her disinterested remarks about his visit to the neighbourhood of her seminary, she even carried her intentions the whole length of succeeding to the maternal controul of the young ladies by a nearer and dearer claim than that of their governess.

"Have you sent for Sniggs?" said Cuthbert to me.

'No—why?" asked I.

"I thought," said my brother—"I may be mistaken—but I thought you said Harriet was unwell. Wouldn't it be better—eh—to—don't you think——"

"Oh, no," replied I ; "her illness is not of a serious character. I rather think she and her sister have something to talk over."

"We saw Miss Fanny at the Rectory," said Mrs. Brandyball, "and Mr. Merman was there. I asked him if he were to be of our domestic circle here to day ; but he replied with an unusual degree of abruptness, that he was engaged elsewhere. Vanity makes men ridiculous—pride, odious. I know the Lieutenant is a great favourite here ; but his manner to-day was not so gracious as it is ordinarily wont to be."

"He has written to me," said I, "to tell me he has been obliged to go to London."

"Ah, poor man, I pity him," said the lady ; "the city for wealth, the country for health ; and whatever allurements the society of the metropolis may display to the youthful mind, the calm repose of the umbrageous grove, overhanging the limpid stream, has in it a charm for delicate minds which is not to be found in busier scenes."

"You are quite right, ma'am," said Cuthbert ; "what can be more delightful? I often get Hutton to wheel me down to the edge of our little river here, and make him throw bits of bread into the water, and there I sit sometimes by the hour together, watching the fish come and eat it. I used to fish myself ; but a rod is such a heavy thing to hold, so I get Hutton sometimes to stand by me

and fish for me; but he seldom catches anything, which is perhaps all for the best; for the hook we know must hurt the fish! besides which, it is so much trouble to take it off, if one does catch one, and put a fresh bait on, that what is called good sport flurries me; and as for crowds—oh dear! dear!—nobody *can* like a crowd except a pick pocket.”

“How imaginative your brother’s mind is!” said Mrs Brandyball to me, looking quite seraphic. “I really believe that those who have resided in oriental climes catch, as it were, that inspiration which seems to imbue the poetry of those regions.”

I made a sort of assenting noise; but quite aware of my inferiority, and looking upon Mrs. B. as a sort of petticoated Sir William Jones, did not venture to offer the slightest remark upon the authors to whom she alluded, and with whom she was of course intimately acquainted. It seemed clear to me, however, that as the Lieutenant had bolted, and my two ladies intended dining by themselves, and Cuthbert’s two ladies had betaken themselves to the Rectory, that Cuthbert, Wells, and I should have the pleasure of Mrs. Brandyball’s company all to ourselves, the which I did not very much dislike, inasmuch as Wells was just the man to draw her out, and thus afford me an opportunity of judging of her intellectual qualities, so that I might at some subsequent period discuss with Cuthbert the propriety or impropriety of keeping the girls at her school. We parted to dress, and I of course visited my darling Harriet. As I suspected, the Lieutenant had behaved shabbily. Wells’s sober arguments with respect to Fanny and his attachment had failed. The reverend general, the church-militant, had been defeated. Merman had, if not money, expectations, and a maiden aunt, which maiden aunt had, it seems, some twenty thousand pounds, the bulk of which was to become the property of her nephew, provided he married a Miss Malony, who was her *protégée*. There were several very extraordinary rumours about the cause of the interest which this young person created in old Miss Merman’s heart—none of which I shall set down, because the characters of cardinals and old maids are sacred, and nobody ought to

say one word about them; however, it was altogether a mystery, into which it appeared the Lieutenant had only been recently admitted by the elder lady of the two.

The scene upstairs was not agreeable: poor Fanny was crying. I believe she really had, under her papa's sanction, worked herself into a liking for the Lieutenant. I tried to like him as a friend—as an acquaintance even—but I never could achieve it, and I ventured to suggest the drying up of her tears; but women are such kind, tender, affectionate creatures, that my advice was wasted. What she ever saw in the man, I never could myself discover. However, he is gone. I am sorry for Fanny, but delighted as far as I am myself concerned.

Wells has just arrived—I hear the rustling of Mrs. Brandyball's roundabout silk gown in the gallery. So—in order to make myself particularly acceptable—down I go once more to receive my guests.

CHAPTER V.

OUR dinner progressed, as the Americans say, most propitiously. Wells was in much better spirits than I had expected to find him, considering the recent severe frustration of all his well-laid schemes for Fanny's matrimonial promotion. He did not in the slightest degree allude to the circumstance, probably because my own case had not entirely slipped his memory, and because any recapitulation of the history of the Lieutenant's wooing might have recalled to my recollection some scenes of a similar character to those which had been recently acted at the Rectory, but which had not been productive of a similar result.

Mrs. Brandyball, whose whole aim and object appeared to be the making everybody round her pleased with themselves, as the readiest mode of making everybody present sed with *her*, began her course of experiments in that

way by eulogizing, in her best set terms, the gallant officer now absent, as one of the most interesting of his sex

"I protest," said she, "that I am not like that particular genus of gallinaceous birds whose tenderest sensibilities are awakened by the appearance of sanguineously-coloured cloth, but I cannot so entirely subdue the natural, and I hope not altogether reprehensible sentiment of gratitude which must unquestionably animate every female heart towards our gallant protectors in the time of peril."

"Ah," said Cuthbert, "yours is a very amiable weakness in that respect. What soldiers have to endure—ah, those marchings and countermarchings—eh?"

"But," continued Mrs. Brandyball, determined to win the Rector entirely, "I never met with an individual so entirely exempt from pretension or affectation as Lieutenant Merman. He appears to me to be unexceptionable."

"Well," said the reverend divine, "there must be tastes of all sorts; for *my* part, I think him as empty a coxcomb ever stepped—"

Mrs. Brandyball stared with astonishment.

"And *I*," said I, "think him odious.

Her eyes opened still wider.

"Ah," said Cuthbert, "do you know I have never taken the trouble to think whether I like him or not."

The manner in which our fair visiter was mystified was exceedingly amusing to us: it was evident, not only that she felt wonderfully disappointed by the way in which her eulogiums upon the Lieutenant had been received, but that she set us down as two of the most hardened hypocrites that ever existed. What else could she think?—she had seen the man living constantly with us,—evincing beyond a shadow of doubt his devotion towards my sister-in-law, and received her with a corresponding frankness of approval. Wells was in no humour to soften or qualify what he had said of him, and I thought I had found out enough of Mrs. Brandyball's character to be certain that when she found that we completely threw him over, she would let him lie in the mire without any farther attempt at his exaltation

Tom, who came in with the dessert, had been upstairs

with Harriet and her sister, and, by the expression of his most expressive countenance, I was dreadfully apprehensive that he had picked enough out of their conversation to understand that the Lieutenant had behaved somehow ungenteelly, and had received his *congé*. The imp looked cunning, and as, besides what he might have extracted from the dialogue of the sisters, he was extremely fond of collecting *facetiæ* from the servants' hall, it seemed extremely likely that the real state of the case had oozed out during the afternoon, and that he might favour us with the domestic version of the "soger officer's" inglorious retreat: Cuthbert, whose consummate skill in the art of child-spoiling I have now watched with more attention than satisfaction, whenever the girls were away, bestowed all his favours upon their lout of a brother, and he had at this period expressed a wish, which came like a gentle command, that Tom should take, or seem to take, a great interest in everything that was going on.

"Whenever you don't understand anything that is talked of, Tommy," said my brother, "always ask me. It is by inquiring, everybody learns. It will save you a great deal of trouble in the end." And accordingly Tom felt bound to be unceasingly inquisitive, always, however, running poor Cuthbert eventually into a corner, and thus irritating him as much as it was possible for him to be irritated by anything. This questionable system of improvement of course destroyed anything like rational or even connected conversation during the presence of the hopeful youth in the dining-room, and knowing how tiresome his company would be to Harriet and Fanny, I had not the courage to send him up to the boudoir, which, as his fair sisters were out, was the only place that could be appropriated to his use.

"I know no more of him personally," said Wells, speaking of some public man, "than I do of the pope of Rome."

"Who is the pope of Rome, uncle?" said Tom.

"My dear boy," said Cuthbert, "he is elected by the cardinals."

"What's a cardinal, uncle?"

"A cardinal, my love, is an ecclesiastical prince, and a member of the sacred college."

"Yes," said Wells, "and the Roman catholics hold that, as the pope represents Moses, so the cardinals represent the seventy elders."

"They wear red hats," said Mrs. Brandyball.

"Why do they wear red hats?" said Tom.

"For the same reason, master Tommy," said Wells, "that millers wear white ones."

"What's that?" said Tom.

"To keep their heads warm," said Wells.

"How incalculably whimsical you are, Mr. Wells," said Mrs. Brandyball.

"Did you never hear of any great man who was called Pope, who never was a cardinal?" said Cuthbert, evidently determined to obtain some share of Mrs. Brandyball's favourable opinion.

"No," said Tom.

"Not Alexander Pope, the poet?" said Cuthbert, leading him dexterously to an affirmative.

"No: who was he?" said Tom.

"Why, Tommy," said Wells, bored to death by the boy's pertinacity, "he was once called a note of interrogation."

"What's a note of interrogation?" said Tom.

"What he was told he was himself, a little ugly thing that asks questions," said the Rector.

"O Mr. Wells," said Mrs. Brandyball, "that is too severe. To *my* mind Pope was not much of a poet."

"To mine," said I, "he appears the greatest poet we ever had."

"Who is the best poet now, Pappy?" said Tom.

"Poet, my dear?" said Cuthbert; "never mind—I don't know, I'm sure,—there, now that will do, don't make a noise,—eat your orange."

"I perfectly agree with you, Mr. Gurney," said Mrs. Brandyball, "as to the utility of the system of exciting the development of the mental qualities by the institution of a principle of inquiry which must, while its results add fresh stores of information to the questioner, induce a constant desire for new acquirements."

Wells and I exchanged looks, for although it may seem most illiberal that we should encourage any doubts or suspi-

cious with regard to the perfect ebriety of our fair guest, we could not fail to remark that the long words in which she dealt rather largely at this period, came out rather indistinctly; however, Wells replenished her glass with port wine, which she that day drank, because, she said, "the cadent humidity" (*Anglicè*, some rain which had fallen during the afternoon) "had imparted an agueish character to the circumambient atmosphere."

My position was an awkward one: whenever she evinced a disposition to retire, her destination would be the drawing-room, with no companion save Tom. I therefore did not feel in the slightest degree desirous of unsettling her; nor dare I venture to pay my poor wife a visit, lest the movement should flurry our fair visiter. I knew that in the present state of their minds her joining Harriet and Fanny would be beyond description disagreeable, so I affected to be exceedingly snug and comfortable; and Wells seconding my efforts to keep the little party together, the lady gradually warming by the generous influence of what, in the earlier part of the day, she would probably have called the "vinous juice," began proportionally to relinquish all her fine words and euphonic phrases, until at length her natural candour led her not only to talk like other people, but to give us some curious particulars of her own "life, character, and behaviour" to which I must say the Rector more ingeniously than ingenuously led and encouraged her.

"Little pitchers have great ears," said Mrs. Brandyball. "Master Tom had better go to his aunty; as for *my* part. I can only say that in France the ladies never leave the table until the gentlemen go."

"Or rather," interrupted Wells, "the gentlemen always go when the ladies leave the table."

"It's the same thing in the end," said Mrs. Brandyball; "now what I meant to say is this,—Mrs. Gurney is unwell, and, I dare say, would be better pleased with my room than my company. Indeed, between you and me and the post, I don't think I am overmuch of a favourite with her at any time; and so—as I feel agueish—although the port wine has done me a great deal of good, I don't want to stir

from where I am till tea-time: we are very snug where we are:—only to be sure, you may have something to talk about—parish, as we say,—in which case I'm off—a nod's as good as a wink to a blind horse ”

“ But you are not a blind orse,” said Tom, looking at her with a perfect consciousness that the expression of her countenance, and the character of her conversation, had undergone a very decided alteration.

“ No, Master Tom,” said the lady, “ that's very true.

“ No,” said Tom; “ no more than hi ham a little pitcher; hi'm hup to you, stoopid as you may fancy me.”

“ Tommy, love,” said Cuthbert, “ don't speak in that manner to Mrs. Brandyball: what would your sisters say if they heard you ?”

“ Say !” said Tom; “ why, they'd laugh like fun, specially Kitty; she would tell me to go it like winkin.”

Here the lady telegraphed to me her desire that Tom should be missing as soon as possible; and while she was occupied in this operation, Wells again replenished her glass, having ascertained that she had arrived at an amiable state of oblivious mystification, in which, although she gave some slight evidence of surprise at finding her goblet, like the Panræure punch-bowl, always full, she could not exactly recollect having previously emptied it.

This tampering with her weakness, and ministering to her failings, might have been, by the more rigid, considered, what is colloquially called, “ taking an unfair advantage,” and I think even I, in my own house, or, what was so called and considered in the neighbourhood, should have interposed to prevent the proceeding, had it not been that I felt I was doing Cuthbert and his daughters-in-law an essential service in contributing to rub off the plating, or which I have before written that he mistook for precious metal, and by allowing his favourite the full indulgence in what Kitty had more than once hinted was, when she was at home, her

“ Custom always of the afternoon.”

permit her to exhibit herself in her natural colours. I confess the signal success which had crowned the early part of

the process, and the suddenness with which the mask had been abandoned, rather induced me to sanction its continuance so long as the lady continued "nothing loth;" and so long as no undue influence was exercised over her to induce her to exceed her usual limits.

I answered her signal, and was obliged after all to desire Tom to go and get his tea with Harriet and Fanny, although it was extremely disagreeable to do what I knew would, to a certainty, make them particularly unhappy.

"I'm hoff," said Tom: "hi knows what's what. She's a-going to let out some of her rum stories,—and his afraid that I should ear um."

"Tom, my boy, go when your uncle tells you," said Cuthbert.

"Oh, nobody wants to stop," said Tom: "I likes to go to Haunt Fan a precious sight better than staying here."

And cut he went, banging the door after him, whistling as he crossed the hall, and forthwith stumped up stairs, to torment the consulting sisters.

"He's a nice boy," said Mrs. Brandyball, "only, as I said,

'Children pick up words, as pigeons peas,
And utter them again as God shall please.

And something might be said about somebody that might a well go no further; as I say, 'prevention is better than cure, and I hate tattling.'

"You are perfectly right," said Wells, with a look of the profoundest respect, and in a manner so horribly deferential, that I had nearly burst into a fit of laughing, although I was in fact in no very mirthful humour.

"Why, la, Mr. Wells," continued the lady, who having freed herself from the restraint imposed by Tom's presence, went off at score: "you must naturally think I know a good deal of the world at my time of life; and so having seen what I have seen in it, my proverb is, 'the least said, sooner mended.'"

Yes, thought I, and I suspect your temporary forgetfulness of so excellent a maxim at the present moment is likely to produce some curious results; for I saw Cuthbert every

now and then elevate his eyebrows, in a manner for him most actively expressive of astonishment at what he heard.

"Why," said the lady, "now I'll tell you; you know those two girls of yours are as fond of me as if I was their own mother. That's mere nature—all nature—every bit of it nature; they never knew their own mother,—then isn't it natural they should love me?—I have always been kind to them, and, as Mr. Gurney knows, never said wrong was the thing they did, though Kitty's as full of mischief as an egg's full of meat:—well then—I—so—oh, what was I saying—something——"

"You were speaking of the natural affection of children for their parents," said Wells, who performed his part in this domestic farce with the greatest gravity.

"So I was," said the lady; "and—I had no mother myself!"

"What! never, Ma'am?" said Wells, with a look of the most serious astonishment.

"Oh, Mr. Wells," said Mrs. Brandyball, "what a man you are! you do remind me so of an uncle of mine at Bristol."

"Oh," said Wells, "then you *had* an uncle?"

"Two," said the lady; "and, as you asked, I had a mother, but she died before I knew anything about her, and that's a very bad thing for a girl."

"It is indeed," said Cuthbert,

"——Sighing like a furnace."

"And so," continued she, "I was left a good deal to myself; and that was, I think, the foundation of all my knowledge. I was what they would call a self taught genius. I never was taught nothing on earth by nobody until after I was married, and then poor Mr. B., who was mighty particular,—he was a very old man when I married him—at least I thought so then,—I don't believe he was near so old as Mr. Gurney, but he was a deal too old to marry me;—so, when I came out with my P's and Q's—all wrong, you know—he used to fidget, and look cross,—and so then I had masters and mistresses,—and got on uncom-

monly well,—and never having any family—none of what the advertising servants call incumbrances—I had plenty of time to devote to myself; and so, as I say, learning is a treasure—I—then—poor Mr. B. died—he was in a very extensive way of business—in the timber trade, but somehow—I don't recollect the particulars—when he died, it was found—I never could understand why—that he had not left me a farden—no, Mr. Wells, as I'm a living woman, not the value of a brass farden—nothing settled on me;—and there I was—nobody to help me—my uncle dead—and my father gone abroad for life."

"What a dreadful position for a female!" said Cuthbert, who, in the tenderness of his heart, and the intensity of his sympathy in our fair friend's misfortunes, totally lost sight of the main points of her history, so candidly—so unconsciously narrated for our edification.

"And what *did* happen to you?" said Wells.

"Oh," said Mrs. Brandyball, "nothing happened to me. I began to think what I had best do, and what was easiest to be done; and just as I was quite at a nonplus, I happened to fall in with a nice respectable lady who kept the school I now keep."

" 'Who wore it at day the arms which now I wear;' said I, involuntarily.

"No, not arms," said the lady—"school,—oh, I remember—out of the play—Norval—ha! ha!—'On the Grampy Hills,'—that's a very moving play—it always makes me cry to think of his poor dear mother."

"My dear Gilbert," said Wells, "you have interrupted Mrs. Brandyball in her autobiography."

"Oh, there's not much to tell," said the lady; "only my new friend, Mrs. Slinkin, wanted an assistant to teach French, Italian, music, geography, and astronomy, and a few other little matters, and so I engaged myself—her great objection was to my name—which, she said, gave a notion that I was—ha! ha!—the idea—addicted to the use of spirits; but, as I said, what's in a name?"—there's Mr. Young, very old—Mrs. White, very brown—Mr. Short

very tall—and Mrs. Little, very big,—and why should not Mrs. Brandyball be as sober as a judge? ”*

“Why not, indeed!” said Wells, once more filling up her glass; “and so, I conclude, you satisfied your friend?”

“Quite entirely,” said Mrs. Brandyball; “so I took the situation, and we got on very comfortably: indeed, the best part of the story is, I didn’t know any of the things I went to teach,—that is to say, I knew a little of them; but what I said was this, I shall learn them all in time, by teaching the girls;—and so I did: and so then Mrs. Slinkin made friends with a Bath doctor,—and he used to recommend Montpelier House as the healthiest place in the neighbourhood,—and so people sent their children to us,—and then we sent out one or two to India, and so made a connexion that way; and at last Mrs. Slinkin married the doctor, and I stepped into the business; and now, I’ll venture to say, there isn’t a better conducted school in all England, Ireland, and Scotland, or Berwick-upon-Tweed.”

Whereupon, to my infinite amazement, I beheld my brother Cuthbert elevate himself to an angle of forty-five, and say in the sweetest imaginable tone,

“To *that* I think I can myself bear testimony Ha!”

This announcement evidently startled Wells as much as it had surprised me. However, it encouraged the lady to a fuller confession, which to me and the Rector was extremely amusing.

“Now,” said she, “you see me as I am; and I have told you all my history; but I should never have opened my lips as I have done this evening, if the girls had been here.”

I knew by the expression of Wells’s countenance, that he was dying to ask her whether, when she talked of opening her lips in the manner she had done this evening, she meant for the purposes of oratory or imbibition.

“Everybody is obliged,” said she, “to play a part in this world, that’s what I mean to say;—what’s a judge off the bench, wig and gown aside?—just like other men, to be sure; but while he is in his court, he must act judge, and

* At the period of which Mr. Gilbert Gurney’s papers treat, James Smith’s admirable song upon the subject of similar anomalies had not appeared:

nothing else,—the same with me:—why, if I was to be natural, as folks call it, and say my say as I like to say it, I should be thought no more of than one of my own house-maids,—recollect the story of the King and the School-master?—to be sure you do. Well, I make the girls believe their governess the very pink of perfection,—never hear me talk what I call plain kitchen English; no, no.”

“Well,” said I, “for my part, I prefer the simplest language that can be used; and I am sure you will forgive me for saying that I have never enjoyed any evening since your arrival here so much as this.”

“That’s it,” said the joyous matron, “I know *that*—now at home, when the girls are gone to bed—early hours are healthy, not one of ’em up at half-past eight—I see no harm in having in a neighbour or two and enjoying a quiet rubber of whist or a pool at loo—limited, you know. Well, as I say, there’s no immorality in playing cards; yet I should not like my girls to catch me at it. Then, after our cards, we have a bit of supper, seldom anything hot, for the girls could smell *that*; and, as I always tell them that suppers are unwholesome, and never allow them a morsel at night, I should not like them to know that I eat supper myself. Well, and then, as I say, what’s the harm of a glass of something warm after one’s snack?”

“Why,” said I, “Kitty told us your principle upon that subject, and even referred to your practice.”

“Ah!” said the lady, “my Kitty is an exception to the general rule,—she is *the* favourite.”

“Thank you, thank you, a thousand times, Mrs. Brandyball,” said Cuthbert, nodding his head approvingly like a china mandarin, “I’m sure of that.”

“I call her one of my pattern-girls, sir,” said the lady.

“I trust,” said Cuthbert, “my dear Mrs. B., you do not over-fatigue them?”

“You know, my dear sir,” said the lady, “I do not. I’ll tell you my course. Up at eight,—prayers, always read by Miss Julietta Timmins, whose grandmother was aunt to the curate of Cripplesdon,—fine voice, sweet delivery, and as slow as a slug,—breakfast at nine,—no nonsense about nerves,—never let them touch tea,—pure milk-and-water,—

the cow and the pump,—out for an hour,—relaxation in the shrubbery,—at ten in school,—everything parceled out,—method is the only mode of managing the mind,—seven minutes and a half for geography,—ditto for knotting hearthrugs,—a quarter of an hour for French,—ten minutes for astronomy,—ditto for the use of the globes,—a quarter of an hour for Italian,—and twenty minutes for mathematics. Then to learn lessons,—dinner at two.”

“Very pretty proceedings,” said Cuthbert. “A little of everything, and not too much of anything.”

“Exactly so,” said Mrs. Brandyball. “Then, till half-past three the play-ground,—in again,—fifteen minutes for music,—six minutes for algebra,—nine minutes for drawing,—a quarter of an hour for English history,—six minutes for hydraulics, under the inspection of Doctor O., and nine minutes and a half for ethics and moral philosophy,—guitar twenty minutes (for those who learn it,)—Newton’s Principia and dancing an hour and a half,—the play-ground again.”

“But,” said Wells, “do you never parade them?”

“Do what?” said Mrs. Brandyball.

“Take them out to walk?” said the Rector.

“Never” exclaimed the agreeable hedgehog, “except to church,” bowing complacently, in order to evince her high respect for the Establishment. “No, no, Mr. Wells I keep my charges all snug within brick walls, tipped with broken bottles. There are but two windows that overlook my garden, and that only in the winter,—planted them out,—no peeping into Montpelier.”

“But,” said I, “do you never walk out with them?”

“No,” said Mrs. Brandyball; “I am rather too heavy for exercise, and I can’t well trust the teachers. I have,” added she, putting her finger to her nose, “I *have* been a teacher myself; besides, if I did take them, it’s as bad. I say to them, ‘Girls, as you go to church, look at nobody—neither to the right nor to the left,—keep your eyes on the ground, my dears;’ and so they do: and when they are at church, the front of the pew is so high, and the seat so low, that they can’t even get a peep at the parson.”

“That is severe, over-much,” said Wells.

"Severe!" said Mrs. Brandyball. "You are a man of the world, Mr. W. Suppose I *did* parade them, as you call it, they would look about; and only think the things they are likely to see in the streets and the roads. If I walked in front, how should I know what they were doing behind my back? If I walked behind them and came last, where's the use?—with poke bonnets on, how can I know what they are doing with their eyes? No, no; I keep them all snug at home, and then the dear loves have nothing to put bad notions into their young heads."

"Very proper, indeed!" said Cuthbert.

"Very," said I, looking at Wells, and thinking of Miss Falwasser as a pattern Miss of Montpelier.

"Now, Mrs. Brandyball," said Wells, "allow me to help you to some more wine." A permission he requested, because she had happened to remove her glass out of his reach.

"Oh no," said she, "no more; 'enough is as good as a feast;' moderation is one of the greatest virtues."

"We will order coffee then," said I, "and have it here; and I will just step up to Harriet and see how she is."

"Give my best regards," said Mrs. Brandyball, "and say if she wishes to see me I shall be too happy to go and sit with her and Miss Wells."

"I will," said I; and giving directions to the servant to bring the coffee and tea, hastened to the two ladies to hear what they had been doing, and report progress with regard to ourselves.

The difference between the appearance of the room I had left, and that of the boudoir which I entered, was very striking. The noisy mirth and chatter of Mrs. Brandyball, the insidious officiousness of Wells, the supine indifference of Cuthbert, the blaze of lamps, and the fumes of wine, were strongly contrasted by the calm serenity of Harriet's sanctum, and the subdued tone of the conversation in which she and her sister were engaged. On the table was a box—open—which contained numerous letters, and I thought a miniature picture. The box, however, was closed the moment I entered, and Harriet's first question was, what we had done with the lady?

"She preferred staying where she was," said I, "to becoming the sole tenant of the drawing-room ; and so I have just ordered coffee in the dinner-room, and snatched a minute to get to you. What have you done with the amiable Tom ?"

"He went to bed soon after nine," said Fanny.

"After nine?" said I ; "why, what o'clock is it now ?"

"Considerably past ten," said Harriet.

"I had no idea of such a thing," said I.

"Time flies in agreeable society," replied Harriet.

"I must not stop," said I, "to tell you how our time *has* been passed ; but we have had a scene——"

"For which," said my wife, "if Master Tom is to be believed, I am pretty well prepared. He came up evidently in a passion with the lady, and has been amusing us with histories of her proceedings, derived from his sister Jane, which, if true, or near the truth, ought to be communicated to Cuthbert."

"All would be unavailing," said I. "After having heard from her own mouth quite sufficient to render any other evidence against her unnecessary, he has just now pronounced the highest eulogium upon her, and declared his unqualified approbation of her establishment. I shall return to them, and as soon as the carriage comes for your father, and brings home the 'darlings,' dispose of the party forthwith."

"How is Papa?" said Fanny ; "is he in good spirits?"

"Much as usual," said I ; "he seemed a little out of sorts at first, but he soon recovered his usual good temper, and has played off our visiter to the greatest possible advantage. However, adieu for the present ; I think half-an-hour will terminate our sitting."

And down I came, not without having, by way of reply to Harriet's "Don't be long, love," given her one affectionate kiss, which I could not help fancying made poor Fanny think of the absent Lieutenant, about whom and his proceedings I admit I became rather anxious to know something more.

When I returned to the dinner-room, I found that its occupants had discovered the "time of night," and that Wells

was beginning to wonder why the carriage had not arrived which was to bring back Cuthbert's living treasures, and bear away the excellent rector himself. However, coffee and tea were disposed of, and Mrs. Brandyball had in a great degree recovered her composure, and begun to resume her figurative style of conversation, before any announcement of its approach was made ; and Cuthbert, who could not have rested unless he had seen the dear girls before he went to bed, seemed disposed, late as it was, to make up his rubber, which, amidst the interest he took in Mrs. Brandyball's autobiography, had slipped out of his mind, when, to my great relief,—for I longed to get up to Harriet, who was looking ill and wearied,—I heard the welcome wheels rolling towards the door.

The ringing of bells and barking of dogs soon confirmed my best anticipations, and Cuthbert's eyes twinkled with delight as he cast them expectingly on the door, so soon to be opened to give to his sight the pattern-girl of Montpelier, Miss Falwasser. The door was not opened—the dogs ceased to bark—and everything resumed its wonted quietude, which remained for two or three minutes unbroken, when at length Hutton made his appearance, and, approaching the Rector, said—

“Mrs. Wells sends her love, sir ; the young ladies were not quite ready to go home, and so she has sent the carriage for you, which can bring them back after you have done with it.”

Wells looked more surprised than pleased, and said, “Hem ! oh !”

“Young rogues,” said Cuthbert, “dancing, I have no doubt.”

“Most likely,” said Mrs. Brandyball, “their Terpsichorean predilections are peculiarly potent.”

This resumption of “style” took place because Cuthbert's servant was in the room, and it became essential, according to her policy, to “act her part” before even the meanest audience.

“Well, then,” said Wells, “I suppose, being sent for, I must go. May I step up and say good night to the girls ?”

"To be sure," said I.

"Good night, Mrs. Brandyball," said the Rector, "I will take care and send back the rose-buds safe."

"Are your horses quite quiet?" said Cuthbert.

"Steady as rocks," said the Rector.

"Because," said Cuthbert, "I am always alarmed about horses since an accident which had very nearly proved fatal to my poor father and myself, many years ago. We were travelling along the road—"

"Yes, I know," said Wells, "Severndroog."

"Oh!" said my brother. "I have told you—eh? I did not recollect—dear, dear! Hutton, just lift me up—there—that will do. Don't go before we have a bit of supper. Mrs. Brandyball says she takes a bit of something cold."

"Oh, not for *me*," said the lady, "if nobody else—I—"

"Tell them to bring the tray," said I to Hutton, in a fit of desperation, covered as much as possible by a look of the most perfect amenity.

"I'm off," said Wells, "good night—good night to both—to all." Saying which, he proceeded to bid adieu to his daughters, and I suppose in some degree to ascertain the state of Fanny's feelings after the events of the morning.

The conversation began to flag—the lady had sunk into a sort of repose closely assimilating to that of Cuthbert; and I really was not enough of a hypocrite to appear pleased or even comfortable. Cuthbert was wheeled to his room to be refreshed with eau de Cologne, and Mrs. Brandyball just stepped up to her room to fetch her pocket-handkerchief. The lady returned, Cuthbert was re-wheeled to his sofa, the sofa was wheeled to the table, which we drew round, and really it was with difficulty I did the honours. The *haut en bas* manner in which the girls treated us all, and regardless of all the commonest observances of the rules of society, usurped the carriages and conveniences of everybody, not only in the house but in the neighbourhood, were unbearable; and now, at a moment when the mistress of that house was ill—if not in body, certainly in mind, and was anxious to get to rest early—here was I forced to remain at my post, helping and serving, while I knew, let the super-

ficial appearances be what they might, that the young ladies who were disturbing all my family arrangements at Ashmead, could not fail of being, under the circumstances, equally unwelcome guests at the Rectory. But even this was light compared with what I had to undergo afterwards. At about half-past eleven—I having heard Harriet's bell ring for her maid twenty minutes before—Mrs. Brandyball perceived through the mist that I was rather uncomfortable, and so she requested me to ring for her maid and her candle, which I most readily did—she beginning I presume, to think that the sylphs were carrying the joke rather too far, and resolving, as far as she was concerned, to get out of the adventure which had originated in her leaving them at Wells's. Away she went. We wished her good night. Cuthbert shook her hand, and they parted affectionately; and when she was gone, I imagined that Cuthbert would be satisfied with recommending the girls to the care of their *soubrette*, or sending by her or Hutton, who was equally careful of the young charges, some kind message, and so betake himself to rest; but no—not a bit of it.

"Now, Gilbert," said he, "just do me the favour to push that little table near the sofa—make me one glass of white-wine negus—none of your—oh, dear me! how my back aches!—none of your Sangaree Sangrorum—like the West Indians—which I have heard folks talk of—ah!—and we will have a quiet bit of chat till the children come home—I cannot go to bed till I have seen Kitty—and—then—we have had no whist—ah!—Sniggs hasn't been here, no—nothing of that sort; and when Kitty tells us of all that has happened—and the—ah!—the party—she is such a capital mimic."

I did as I was desired, or, as I felt it, commanded; and then concocted a tumbler of a similar mixture for myself: the fire grew dull, the room grew cold, I could hear the ticking of the clock in the hall.

"Gilbert," said my brother, "that's a dear woman—the schoolmistress—ah!—"

A gentle tap at the door interrupted my answer.

"Come in," said I.

"It's only me, sir," said Foxcroft, my wife's maid.

"Do you want *me*?" said I, hourly anticipating the event which was so materially to add to my respectability.

"No, sir," said Foxcroft, "only my mistress says, as you mayn't come upstairs till late, if you would recollect that she wishes to have the carriage to-morrow about twelve."

"Certainly," said I, "I'll remember to order it."

And then she shut the door, and I returned to the side of Cuthbert, cut to the heart that poor Harriet, without meaning the slightest reproach, should have sent me a quiet humble message to order her own carriage, in order to preserve it from a seizure on the part of those—I will not designate them—who were now keeping me out of my bed to await their return from a place where they had no business to be, to hear the praises of her who had had no business to leave them there.

The candles, by which Cuthbert occasionally fancied he read, were already in the sockets; the lamp was glimmering and flickering with a sort of sputtering noise, the certain *avant-courier* of the most unsavoury of smells; still, hardly able to keep his eyes open, my poor brother went on muttering praises of the regularity and good order of the Montpelier establishment; while I, listening with the most earnest attention for the approach of the carriage, watched almost unconsciously the fast-fading fire in the grate. I began to get exceedingly chilly, the lamp gave stronger evidence of its proposed departure, and I was driven to the necessity of lighting my bedroom candle, to escape the darkness with which we were threatened. Having done which, I despatched the lamp somewhat upon the principle of the butcher's wife, who called to her husband to come and kill a sick sheep before it died.

Twang went the clock: one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, TWELVE.

"It is twelve o'clock," said I.

"What little rakes those girls are!" said Cuthbert; "I hope they won't tire themselves, poor dears! I dare say they are dancing—their sainted mother was very fond of reels; but—ah! well—it is what we must all come to—poor Tom! By the way, he didn't come in to wish us good night.

"He stayed with Harriet and Fanny," said I.

"It is getting coldish," said Cuthbert; "stir the fire, Gilbert—hadn't you better ring for some coals?"

"Why," said I, obeying orders, "I suppose they cannot be much longer—midnight is late for the Rectory."

"I conclude Harriet is gone to bed," said Cuthbert, in a tone of voice which satisfied me that he would have been more interested in the fact of his own favourite cat having been made up for the night in her well-lined basket.

"Oh yes," said I, "two hours since, I should think—she is not by any means well." And then I thought of her "Come soon, love," which seemed to ring in my ears to a popular air, which then I fancied I traced in the ticking of the clock.

"Yaah," said Cuthbert, "I'm getting sleepy myself."

"Hadn't you better go to bed?" said I.

"No, no," replied my brother, "not till I have bid **Kitty good-night.**"

He then relapsed into silence, and to say truth, I felt no inclination to disturb the tranquillity of the scene. A quarter after twelve—half past twelve came; at which period I was about to suggest that something extraordinary must have happened, but suddenly checked myself, when I recollected that if Cuthbert's thoughts had been directed to the possibility of an accident, he would, with the fear of Blackheath before his eyes have ordered out every man, woman, and child of the family, in search of his babes in the wood, so I waited, and like the turnspit who, in the Spanish proverb, is made to console himself during his work on the culinary treadmill with the certainty that "the largest leg of mutton must get done in time," sat to listen for the ladies and think of my wife.

At length just as I pictured Harriet buried in the happy depth of her first sleep up drove the carriage. The footman, no doubt irritated by being kept up unusually late, and turned out for a second time, long after midnight, rang the house bell with a force and power which made it reverberate through the hall and staircase loudly enough to have waked the dead. This set the three dogs barking all in

different keys. Hutton and the footman hurried to let in the revellers, upsetting one of the hall chairs in their haste; all of which disturbance was followed by the loudest possible banging down of the carriage steps, immediately under my wife's window; the uproar only concluding after the carriage-door first, and the house-door next, had been also banged to and fastened—the former accompanied by the imprecations of Wells's servant outside the house, and the latter by the inevitable rattling of chains and scraping of bolts within.

"Well, dearest," said Cuthbert, "you have made it late—have you been very happy?"

"Yes, Pappy," said Kitty, "very. Oh, you mustn't look at me—I'm such a figure! danced every bit of curl out of my hair! I couldn't get away before—it was all Bessy's doing—her Pa went to bed the minute he came back, but Master Buggins and his cousin Harry *would* have two more dances, and after *that*, we had three of the new-fashioned things they call waltzes—Oh Pappy, it was so nice, and made me so giddy, and so pleased, you can't think!" *

"And how were *you* entertained, Jenny?" said I, standing candle in hand, prepared for a start.

"I liked it very well, thank you, uncle," said Jane, who looked as white as a sheet, with a pair of eyes as red as a ferret's.

"Gilbert," said Cuthbert to me, "what do you think *this* young lady has been whispering to *me*?"

"That she wants her maid, I suppose," said I.

"No," said Cuthbert, "something else—she says *she* should like a little bit of something to eat."

"Eat!" said I.

"Yes, uncle," said Kate; "we had only some lemonade and cakes, and that was at about half-past nine, and we dined at two with Bessy, so ——"

"Come, come," said Cuthbert, "ring the bell, Kitty,

It was just about the period at which Mr. Gurney wrote this portion of his papers that this irritating indecency, which has since been so universally adopted, was first introduced into English society.—ED.

love, and we'll get you some cold fowl, or something of that sort,—you would not like anything warm?"

"I am afraid," said I, "they are not likely to get anything warm. I surmise that Mrs. Habijam (so was my cook named) is fast asleep."

Hutton made his appearance to answer the bell, for, as he must inevitably sit up to undress his master, and put him to bed, he had relieved my butler.

"Hutton," said Cuthbert, "these young ladies want something to eat."

"Very well, sir," said Hutton, in a tone which sounded like—very ill, sir.

"Anything, Hutton," said Kate; "a bit of cold fowl and some tongue—nothing sweet."

"I'll go and see, Miss," said Hutton.

As I foresaw that Hutton, in order to put the young lady's commands into execution, must necessarily call up Mrs. Habijam, who, although my cook, acted also as house-keeper, in order to get at the larder, and that my wearied butler must be "rousted out," to get at the wine, or whatever other liquid the sylphs might select for their regale; and as I beheld Hutton, by way of a preliminary, return to the room with a pair of fresh candles, and feeling that, as my presence was, if agreeable to the trio, by no means essential to their enjoyments, I ventured to take the liberty of saying that, as it was growing late, and I had an engagement early in the morning, I would wish them good night. To my proposal I found not the slightest objection made by any one of the company; and accordingly, having shaken hands with my brother, and having been kissed boisterously by Kate, and gently by Jane, I betook myself to my room, where I found poor Harriet sitting up in her bed, wondering at the noise in the house at so late an hour, and fancying ten thousand things had happened, about which she had no opportunity of inquiring. I will not describe my feelings, because they are not purely fraternal. The conclusion of the affair, however, was not the least annoying part of it, for it was certainly past two before Kate and her sister came dancing up-stairs to their

room, singing one of the airs to which they had been wisked about by Master Buggins and his cousin Henry, so loudly as to wake poor Harriet from the second sleep into which she had happily fallen.

What seemed so particularly odd in the whole of this ousiness was, that the day on which so disagreeable an event had occurred in Wells's family should have been fixed upon for what really was an unusual gaiety there. I found, however, that the little party had been arranged before the *dénouement* of the Merman affair, and while he was yet in the house; and that Mrs. Wells, with the proper spirit of her sex, resolved that the dismissal of the Lieutenant, which would be of course the talk of the whole place in a day or two, should not appear in any degree to have affected them, or made the slightest alteration in their arrangements.

I remember seeing once at a country fair a boy of about ten years of age, in a scarlet jacket much tinselled, a pair of dirty white trousers, with flesh-coloured stockings pulled up over them, his hair being flaxen, and matted, and his face dirty and painted, performing a hornpipe in front of a booth, a minute after his father had given him a most savage horsewhipping for some conduct, I suppose, militating against the laws and customs of the modern Thespians, the effect of which was very remarkable. The poor child was crying with pain, the tears running down his well-ochred cheeks, dancing as hard as he could, accompanied by periodical exclamations by his respectable parent of, "Jump, you dog!—go along, sir!—higher, sir!" which overtopped the sound of the one fiddle upon which the child's eldest well-spangled sister was playing the tune. The effect was at once ludicrous and painful, and somehow I could not help associating it in my mind with Mrs. Wells's uncommonly lively little party in the evening of the day of the defeat of all their well-laid schemes of settlement for Fanny.—However, I got to sleep at last; but little did I anticipate what was in store for me before I should sleep another night.

CHAPTER VI.

THERE is a certain point to which complacency and forbearance may go, but there is also a certain point at which they must infallibly stop ; and when I awoke in the morning, and thought over the events of the preceding evening, and moreover found my poor Harriet extremely unwell, I fell to considering what course I could adopt to rescue her and myself from the unbearable thralldom in which we found ourselves, without offending Cuthbert, or, on the other hand, of evincing a proper sense of gratitude for the kindnesses he had lavished upon us.

I was perfectly satisfied of his entire unconsciousness that he was doing anything either to distress or inconvenience us ; he felt convinced that we *must* like what *he* liked, or perhaps it would be nearer the truth to say, that he did not trouble himself to think much upon the subject. By this I do not mean that he was indifferent to our comfort or happiness, but that seeing the readiness with which all his wishes were complied with, and hearing neither remonstrance nor complaint, he was not aware that he was, in point of fact, making us positively miserable. As the morning wore on, however, I began to think that my mind was likely to be occupied with even more important matters. Harriet's indisposition increased, and I was informed about seven o'clock by the proper authorities that it would be advisable to call in medical aid. I immediately went to Harriet to inquire whether her disinclination to Sniggs continued as strong as ever, and in reply was referred to her mother, for whom she had sent. I knew exactly what the result of this reference would be. The prejudice entertained by Mrs. Wells against the unfortunate son of Galen, however natural, was unconquerably strong ; and as the tone of Harriet's voice convinced me that in submitting the subject to her fond parent she would say nothing likely to remove or mitigate it, I determined at once to send off a servant to Dr. Downey, a lady's doctor of considerable reputation and extensive practice, who lived within a very short distance of Win-

chester. Time it seemed would not allow of my sending to London for a Sir Charles or a Sir John, as I had, with a view to soothing poor Sniggs's feelings, originally intended. I was, therefore, compelled to run the risk of offending him, hoping, however, in some degree to qualify what I knew would be considered a grievance, by getting leave to join him in the commission with the doctor, who, in addition to his eminent professional qualities, was the very pink of politeness, and a universal favourite.

Finding that the proposed arrangement was agreeable to Harriet, I forthwith wrote to the Doctor and sent off my letter, and had the satisfaction of finding upon Mrs. Wells's arrival that what I had done met with her entire approbation. From the moment, however, that the Doctor was sent for, and my respected mother-in-law proceeded to her daughter's room, I felt certainly as I had never felt before—my anxiety had commenced—my worry had begun. I dreaded least the Doctor should come too late—that some unforeseen accident might befall my beloved Harriet—I felt, in short, as if I had suddenly become a useless and superfluous member of my own family; I walked about the hall, went into one room, and then into another—stopped—listened—then sat down; until at length I resolved upon going into the grounds, and made a sort of business of looking at the celery and sea-kale in the kitchen garden. The kale covers might have been bee-hives, the celery trenches an asparagus-bed for all I cared, and into the house I came again, when to my horror I heard a sound certainly most unexpected by me at such a moment: that of the tuning of a fiddle in the drawing-room next to my wife's bed-chamber! I hurried up-stairs astounded at such a circumstance, and there beheld Mr. Kittington, the dancing-master, just in the act of beginning the then popular country-dance of the "Opera Hat," that being fixed upon for the first practice of the before-breakfast lesson to the young ladies. When I entered the room, the two pets, dressed with remarkably short petticoats and dirty white kid shoes, sprang forward to welcome me, and expected, I concluded, to see me look remarkably well pleased.

"My dear girls," said I, "you cannot take your lesson

here, nor, as I think, anywhere else this morning: Mrs. Gurney is extremely ill, and the noise will distract her."

"Ill?" said Jane; "what's the matter with her, uncle?"

"Jane," said Kitty, "how *can* you be so foolish—she is not *very* ill, uncle?"

"Indeed she is," said I.

"And so is Tom," said Jane, "he is all out in a rash, and can't see out of his eyes. Pappy is not up yet, but I'll tell him as soon as I can."

"Indeed!" said I, wondering at the sort of mind in which my Harriet and Mrs. Falwasser's Tom could be by any means associated. During this little colloquy Mr. Kittington, in stockinet pantaloons and pumps—time half past eight in the morning—stood fiddle in hand, naturally looking particularly awkward.

"I tell you what we can do," said Kate; "we can go and take our lesson in the laundry, because I know it will vex Pappy if we lose it altogether."

"It is," said I, "indeed an essential point in your education."

"Besides," added Kate, "Mr. Kittington has had to come so early to give it us."

"Do what you please, my love," said I, "only I assure you Harriet is not well enough to bear the noise here."

I did this civilly and quietly, although I felt sick and wretched, because I did not like to allow the dancing-master to see that the domination of the Falwassers was so irksome to us as it really was, and because I did not wish the professor of the Terpsichorean art—or science—as the case may be, to think that I underrated either the importance of the study, or his own personal assiduity in giving his attendance; and so I conclude they *did* retire to the laundry, for I heard no more fiddling, nor did I see the young ladies, as it turned out, till a late period of the day.

I sent for Foxcroft, inquired how her mistress was, not daring to venture near the room myself. She told me that she was going on very well. This satisfied me: I did not quite understand what it meant; but the words "very well," conveyed to my mind the intelligence generally which I wished to receive.

When the young ladies, who seemed entirely to sympathize with the dancing-master as to the importance of the lesson, had flitted to the laundry as a fit scene of action, waited impatiently for—what I could hardly define. Cuthbert at length got up, was dressed, and, as usual, wheeled into breakfast; but Mrs. Brandyball pleaded headache, I have every just reason for thinking sincerely, and did not make her appearance, Cuthbert and I were therefore *tête-à-tête* at the morning's repast.

"Poor Tommy," said Cuthbert, "is—ah dear—! very unwell; he came to see me while Hutton was getting me up—he is all over red spot—I must send for Sniggs after breakfast."

Now, of all things in the world that I did not desire, or rather of all things in the world I particularly wished to avoid, was a visit from Sniggs in the course of this morning. I knew him so well, and was so perfectly aware of the activity of his interference, that I was convinced neither solicitation nor remonstrance would prevent his making his way to poor Harriet, whose very safety might depend upon her not being excited, as I knew she would be by his appearance in her room, the moment he heard she was unwell.

"I think," said I, "as I expect Dr. Downey here in an hour or two, it would be no bad thing to let *him* see Tom."

"True," said Cuthbert, "so he may; but then I asked Sniggs to come here to-day to play chess, and it is only his coming a little earlier, and then he can see Harriet; and so, because the physician, whatever you call him, may not be here in time—eh—it is as well, as Mrs. Brandyball says, to have two strings to one's bow—eh?"

All these arrangements of Cuthbert's were made, as usual, unconsciously, as if expressly for the subversion of all my prudential plans of operation; and yet I did not see how I could counteract their effect; for if I confided to him Harriet's disinclination for Sniggs, the first thing Cuthbert would most assuredly do, would be to tell him the whole story the moment he arrived, and thus make an enemy, even if he were yet friendly, of the peripatetic reporter of Blissford.

"Now," said Cuthbert, "have you formed any plans with regard to the young stranger?"

"What," said I, the child unborn?"

"Yes," said Cuthbert. "I am to be god-father; and you shall find my dear Gilbert, that I do not consider the obligations of such a connexion merely nominal. If it is a boy, let him have a profession—make him a lawyer—or—eh—perhaps that will be too fatiguing; and if it is a girl——"

"A thousand thanks for all your kindness," said I; "but let us secure the treasure, before we discuss how to dispose of it."

"Nothing like foresight," said Cuthbert; "I am sorry for poor Tommy—I—hadn't Hutton better step to Sniggs?"

The kindness which mingled with my brother's anxiety to upset my schemes was so remarkable and so genuine, that I did not know how to thwart him in his wishes, and was on the point of ringing for his man, when the sound of wheels caught my ear. I turned to the window, and saw, to my delight and surprise, the great object of my present solicitude, Dr. Downey's carriage, rapidly approaching the house.

"Here's the Doctor," said I; "we need not send for Sniggs; he shall see Tom before he goes up-stairs."

"Ah," said Cuthbert, looking quite satisfied, "that will do nicely."

I hastened to the hall to welcome the physician, whose early appearance was very agreeably accounted for by the fact, that my servant on horseback had overtaken him about four miles from Ashmead, as he was returning from a visit of a similar nature to that which he immediately turned his horses heads to pay to Harriet. I presented the Doctor to my brother, and then went up-stairs to apprise Mrs. Wells of his arrival. Cuthbert, who thought of nothing but Tommy and his rash, began immediately to open his case to the Doctor, who, not being the least aware that there was a second patient to attend to, was mystified in a great degree by Cuthbert, who, in consequence of what I had said with respect to Downey's seeing the boy before he visited Harriet, thought I had left the room to fetch him for inspection.

"I always say," said Cuthbert, "that prevention is better than cure, and that the earlier anything of this sort—eh, is looked after, the better."

"Certainly, sir," said the Doctor, gracefully bowing his well-powdered head, "nothing is wiser than precaution."

"I don't exactly understand the cause of the complaint," said Cuthbert; "but I dare say you will be able to tell when you see the patient."

"Why," said the Doctor, with a look which implied some little doubt of Cuthbert's state of mind, "yes, I"—

"I think it may proceed from cold," said Cuthbert, "being out at night will do it sometimes—letting off squibs and fireworks—silly thing—poor dear, nearly lost an eye already, poor thing."

The Doctor pushed back his chair and stuck the poker into the fire.

"Yes, sir," said he, "very likely."

"Great romps overheat themselves," said Cuthbert, "my two daughters are never half careful enough in that respect; I am often afraid that something of the same sort will happen to *them*."

"Oh," said Downey, walking towards the window, "yes, sir, as you said just now, caution is wisdom."

"Yes," said Cuthbert, delighted with the urbane manner in which the physician humoured him, "and especially about *their* age, poor things, before they have done growing."

"You are quite right, sir," said Downey, "quite—perfectly, nothing can be more judicious. Does Mr. Gurney expect me to follow him?"

"No, no," said Cuthbert, "he is gone to fetch your patient—probably dirty hands want washing,—hair to be combed, or something of that sort,—wicked little thing, and as full of mischief as possible."

What farther might have been said to illuminate the physician, had the dialogue lasted any longer, it is impossible to surmise. Certes, my friend Downey's eyes greeted me with a look of infinite satisfaction as I made my appearance.

"Well, Gilbert," said Cuthbert, "where's Tommy?"

"Oh," said I, "I quite forgot, I will ring for Hutton to fetch him."

"I thought you were gone on purpose," said Cuthbert,

"else I could have rung myself, or, at all events, have requested the Doctor to do so for me."

"May I presume to ask," said the Doctor, "who Tommy is?"

"A son-in-law of my brother's," said I, "who feels unwell, and whom my brother wishes you to see."

"Oh," said the Doctor, "I understand—I did not at first see:" saying which, he withdrew the poker from the fire, and laid it on the fender.

Hutton obeyed the summons, received his orders, and in a few minutes returned with Master Tommy, whose appearance was by no means prepossessing.

"Come here, Tommy, my dear," said Cuthbert; "let this gentleman look at you."

"Sha'n't" said Tom. "I won't be physicked—not for nobody;—the pimples is come hout, and they may go him agin for all I care, only they hitches like winkin."

"My dear sir," said Dr. Downey, "there is no question about the young gentleman,—a clear case of small-pox."

"Small-pox, sir!" said Cuthbert; "I never had it, sir. I shall die of it. Tommy, my love, go to the other end of the room. Gilbert, open the window, ring for Hutton,—get me some eau de luce and water,—camphor.—Oh!—you really don't mean it?"

"I do, indeed, sir," said the Doctor. "I am happy to say that the character of the eruption at present appears favourable; attention and care will most probably get him well through it, I have no doubt: it is of the distinct kind, and of course less serious than the confluent. I will write a prescription for him before I go up stairs; he had better be put to bed, and of course his diet is to be of the most sparing character."

"I won't be starved," said Tommy; "and I won't go to bed, and I won't take no physic."

"Oh yes, my dear, you will, I am sure," said the Physician. "Your health requires it; you would be in great danger if you did not do as we tell you, and perhaps would die."

"Then I should be poked into the pit-hole," said Tommy. "I'll jump out of bed the minute I'm put in. I'll eat what-

ever I can ; and as for the physic, see if I don't shy it all under the grate."

"No you won't, my dear," said Cuthbert. "Hutton,—Doctor, if you don't want to examine him any more.—Hutton, put down the eau de luce, and take Master Tommy away,—there's a dear."

"I will ask him a few questions, with your permission," said Dr. Downey ; "but we can go into another room."

"I sha'n't tell for nothing," said Tommy.

"If you please, sir," said Foxcroft, rushing into the room very pale, "Mrs. Wells wants the Doctor,—my mistress—"

"What !" said I, "here, Tom, the Doctor shall see you by-and-by. Now, Doctor."

"Doctor," screamed poor Cuthbert at the top of his voice, "what's to be done for *me*? I shall catch this infernal disorder."

"What disorder?" cried Mrs. Brandyball, who came sailing into the room. "What disorder?"

"The small-pox, ma'am," said Cuthbert. "I never had it."

"Small-pox !" screamed the lady. "Nor I, Mr. Gurney," and forthwith she fell into hysterics.

Such a scene never had I witnessed. Tom roaring,—Foxcroft crying,—Mrs. Brandyball hooting,—Cuthbert groaning,—the dogs barking,—two canary-birds singing as loud as they possibly could,—Hutton scolding the dogs,—I hustling the Doctor out of the room,—and Kitty and Jane scudding across the hall to take leave of Mr. Kittington, the dancing-master. I led the Doctor up to my wife's room, and having just looked in, Mrs. Wells held up her hand to caution me against speaking. I heard a faint murmur of complaint from my beloved wife,—the door was shut upon me,—and I burst into tears. I did,—and I am not ashamed to record the fact. Oh, the thrilling, aching, throbbing pain of anxiety which seemed to affect every part of my body and limbs ; my hands were icy cold, my tongue was parched, my knees trembled ; my kind, my affectionate, my darling Harriet was in pain and in sorrow, and I unable either to assist her or soothe her in her sufferings. I did

not know how to dispose of myself ; return to the breakfast parlour I could not ; where I was, I dared not stop, lest I should hear the sound of Harriet's voice in grief and anguish. I went down stairs, I fled to my sanctum, and shut myself in my library, to pray for the safety and restoration of the being I loved best on earth.

Silence had been restored, and I heard nothing where I sat, except the subdued ringing of the servants' dinner-bell, which told me that I had been for upwards of two hours in my concealment ; presently, however, I was hunted out : Hutton knocked at the door, and after repeating the operation twice, I felt obliged to answer, to prevent a continuation of his thumping—my brother wanted me. I of course obeyed the summons ; and there I found Cuthbert covered with a shawl and a blanket, extended on the sofa, with the three windows of the room all open.

"What a thing to have happened !" said Cuthbert ; "it is,—dear me,—what shall we do?—poor dear Mrs. Brandyball never had it,—nor either of the girls. I have sent for Sniggs,—they have shut themselves up in Kitty's room with camphor bags and eau de Cologne till he comes. They are all going to be vaccinated,—so am I,—and Hutton and I have been speaking to Mrs. Habijam, and the coachman, and the two housemaids, and they have all agreed, and I want you to let Foxcroft be vaccinated, too,—there's nothing like precaution."

"But, my dear brother," said I, "all these people have had either the small-pox or been vaccinated before, rely upon it."

"Ah, but," said Cuthbert, "the cow-pox is like everything else, it wears out ; besides, it was not discovered when I was born, nor when you were born. I don't recollect having had the small-pox, nor do either of my girls."

"Probably not," said I ; "and probably none of the establishment recollect a similar event in any of their lives, inasmuch as it generally occurs at a period to which the memory of man reacheth not."

"Well, it can do no harm," said Cuthbert ; "let Sniggs see poor Tommy as soon as he comes, and then have him

well fumigated,—ah,—or washed,—anything you think safest,—and then let him begin his operations. I'll have poor Pilly vaccinated, too."

"Who?" said I.

"Pilgarlick," said Cuthbert, looking the picture of despair.

"What, your tom-cat!" exclaimed I.

"I think it will be safest," sighed he. Hutton paused in his operation of bathing his master's temples, to see whether he were pleased to be facetious, or was in sober earnest. I am convinced it was the purest bit of matter-of-fact solicitude that ever man expressed. The arrival of Sniggs was the signal for action. I was ordered to convey him to Tom's apartment, in order to satisfy Cuthbert as to the reality of the existence of the disease he so much dreaded; and accordingly I conveyed him to the room where Tom had compounded with himself as to not going to bed, by having taken off his jacket and waistcoat, and lain down on the quilt with his boots on, ready for a start whenever he felt disposed to run riot.

"There," said I to the apothecary, "there's a patient for you. What's the matter with him?"

"Hold up, Master Tom," said Sniggs; "look to the light—eh,—umph,—feel any itching?"

"Yes, I do," said Tom.

"Umph,—I see," said Sniggs; "obstinate perspiration,—a sort of nettle-rash,—better out than in,—little cooling physic will set all to rights."

"Why," said I, "we were thinking it was the small-pox."

"The small-pox, my dear Mr. Gurney!" said Sniggs; "not a bit of it. Where's the synocha,—where the languor and drowsiness which invariably characterize that complaint? No, no; the blood wants cooling. I'll send him something which will set him all to rights in no time."

"Well," said I, "but do *you* know we generally believe it to be the small-pox."

"Ha, ha!" said Sniggs, "that's deuced good; who is likely to know best?"

"My brother says it is small-pox," said I.

"Oh very likely," said Sniggs.

"Mrs. Brandyball says so," continued I; "so does the housekeeper, and—"

"My dear sir," said Sniggs, "these are all very respectable people in their way, but wholly incapable of distinguishing the difference between the most dangerous case of variola confluens and the simplest effect of febris urticata."

"Well," said I, rather worried at being pooh-poohed in so decided a manner, "Dr. Downey, who is here, says it is the small-pox."

"The deuce he does!" said Sniggs. "Dr. Downey here,—is he?—umph,—that's Mrs. Wells's doing,—never mind,—does *he* say it is the small-pox?—Hold up your face again, Master Tom. Small-pox, eh?" Sniggs rubbed the boy's forehead, and looked very wise. "Dr. Downey says it is small-pox;—put out your tongue, Master Tom.—So,—by Jove, it *is* small-pox, sure enough;—never like to create unnecessary alarm,—umph,—very odd. Oh, yes, yes,—that's small-pox,—not the least doubt of it,—never can mistake *that*."

The suddenness of Sniggs's conviction with regard to Tom's disorder would have affected me more perhaps than it actually did, if I had not recollected that a much more eminent man did precisely the same thing when one of the Princes of the Blood caught, in mature age, and for the second time, the measles. Upon that occasion his Royal Highness having ascertained from two of the most eminent physicians of the day the real nature of his complaint, subsequently sent for his facetious body-physician, who, like Sniggs in the present instance, most strenuously denied the least resemblance between measles and his Royal Highness's rash, until, being informed that Baillie and Heberden had both decided that measles was the complaint—like Sniggs, the worthy doctor looked again, and decided that measles it was.

Having now received the authentication of all our worst fears, I proceeded to Cuthbert, having previously informed our apothecary of his extreme desire to have every living inhabitant of the house vaccinated, and of his anxious wish for his complete purification, previous to his visit. Sniggs, delighted with the idea of having anything to do, seemed

smoothed at once, and smothered the angry feeling which I saw rankling with regard to Dr. Downey's visit; however, I was *à l'abri*, for he laid the whole scheme at my poor dear mother-in-law's door, and believing in the proverb which makes the mother say—

“ My son is my son till he gets him a wife,
My daughter's my daughter all the days of her life,”

imputed to her influence over Harriet his very disagreeable exclusion from the honour of ushering the heir or heiress of Ashmead, as the case might be, into this world of trouble. So far I got off scot free, and I was not sorry for it; because, as poor Mrs. Wells had long before rendered herself obnoxious to what Lieutenant Merman used to call Sniggs's “sculduddery,” a little more of his ire could do *her* no harm, and I might escape unscathed.

In the hall we encountered Mrs. Habijam, who appeared entirely lost in a dread of the consequences of the infection; she intreated Sniggs to make all the haste he could to his own house, to procure a sufficient supply of what she called the “various” matter; in short, I never saw a panic so general or so serious. I congratulated myself, however, on having escaped Mrs. Brandyball and the young ladies, whose appearance would have detained me from fresh inquiries about Harriet. All I heard was, that everything was going on extremely well, and that Dr. Downey wished to know when luncheon would be ready; this was music to my ears—he could not care about luncheon if everything was *not* going on extremely well, and I felt delighted in having the opportunity, under such circumstances, of talking to the man to whose skill and judgment I was to be indebted, under Providence, for the safety of my dearest love.

Luncheon was ready, but Cuthbert had retired to his own room. The exertion of being very much frightened had been more than he could bear; besides, as he was resolved to be the first person in the family vaccinated, he determined, like Cæsar, to die with decency, and accordingly betook himself to his bed, in order to catch the gentle infection from the lancet of our Lampedo.

"Well, my dear : :," said the Doctor "we are all doing as well as possible; the sweetness of our dear patient's temper cannot fail to be in the highest degree beneficial to her during her illness. I think I never saw such mildness and amiability. Great care must be taken about the young gentleman's small-pox. I trust we shall have one child in the family, in an hour or two, about whose having been vaccinated or not there can be no question; and upon that account, I should say, the lad ought to be removed while he is yet able to bear it."

"But whither is he to go?" said I; "and will his affectionate father-in-law suffer him to be separated from him?"

"I am, of course, not competent to answer either of those questions," said the Doctor; "but I only do my duty in apprizing you of the danger to be apprehended to the infant by his remaining here, and having communication with those who are also in the habit of going into Mrs. Gurney's room."

"What can I do?" said I; "my brother is actually in bed; he, I am sure, will neither let Tom go without him, nor with him; in the one case he would apprehend the worst consequences to the boy, and in the other the most dreadful results to himself."

"I merely speak professionally, Mr. Gurney," said the Doctor, "and not with any view of interfering with your domestic arrangements; but were I to remain silent upon the subject, I feel I should incur a very serious responsibility."

It struck me that perhaps Sniggs would allow Tom to be removed to his house, whither, perhaps, my brother might be induced to let him go, with the satisfactory conviction that he would be constantly under the superintendence of the medical man in whom, spite of my mother-in-law's prejudices, he had an exceedingly high opinion. I mentioned this expedient to the Doctor, who, being acquainted with Sniggs only by name, and totally ignorant of the terms upon which he lived with our family, hesitated—as he generally did—to give any decided opinion upon its probable success. I resolved, at all events, to mention it to Cuthbert, before Snigg's reappearance at Ashmead. I did

so, and found him by no means disposed to expose his darling lad to the difficulties of a removal, or the inconveniences of a strange house.

"No," said Cuthbert, "*I* had better go—Mrs. Brandyball would like to take the two girls—you know they were going on Tuesday; so, I think, after I have undergone the operation, I will try to be got up, and go with the girls and their governess to Bath—eh, dear!—what a terrific idea!—how dreadful a circumstance!—however, we must make three days of it—it must be nearly a hundred miles from this to Bath."

"Yes, my dear Cuthbert," said I; "but however this plan may secure *you* and the girls from danger, and however happy we should be to pay every attention to Tom in your absence, it leaves poor Harriet and her child exposed to extreme peril."

"I have ordered Hutton to sprinkle vinegar all over the house," said Cuthbert, "and to fumigate the passage down stairs with gunpowder."

"Yes," replied I; "I can vouch for his activity too. I never smelt anything so horrible in my life."

"Ah!" said Cuthbert, "never mind smells—dear, dear—isn't it dreadful?"

"Well," said I, seeing that I had no chance of succeeding alone in obtaining an order of removal for Master Tom, "I will go back to Doctor Downey, and the moment Sniggs comes he shall be sent to you."

Sniggs did come—I presented him to the physician, and felt at once pleased and perplexed by finding his opinion with regard to the removal of Master Falwasser entirely agree with that of the Doctor. Sniggs was essentially good-natured, extremely fond of meddling, delighted to be "doing," and excessively anxious to show the "public" of Blissford that he stood exceedingly well with the family at Ashmead, in spite of Mrs. Gurney having, under her mother's influence, called in other medical aid: and he—as it were intuitively—started the very proposition which I was about to make.

"Why not take Master Tom to *my* house?" said Sniggs;

"I shall have him there under my own eye. Mrs. Sniggs will be as careful of him as if he were our own. All difficulty will be removed, and I shall be too happy to be of any use in relieving you from your difficulties."

"Have you any objection to open the business to my brother?" said I.

"Not the least," replied the apothecary. "That he ought to be moved from this house, nobody can doubt; he can be removed at present without danger—where can he go better than to the house of a medical practitioner, in whom, as I flatter myself, his father-in-law has so much confidence? I'll go this instant—give my opinion and advice—vaccinate my patient, and then make every necessary arrangement."

The natural readiness for action which uniformly characterized the proceedings of Mr. Sniggs, blended with the prospect of the profits arising from his successful attendance upon the darling lout, filled him with energy and eloquence. What he said or what he did in the way of persuasion to my brother, I do not pretend to guess. All I know is, that in less than half an hour the operator returned to the dinner-room, where Downey and I were sitting, and with sparkling eyes and a joyous countenance announced the consent of Cuthbert to the arrangement, provided the Doctor would give a favourable opinion as to the safety of the young patient's transport from one place to the other.

Our difficulties now were nearly overcome—we were sure of the Doctor's voice in our favour, and a few minutes more sufficed for the arrangement of the whole affair. I confess I felt myself relieved of a heavy burden, and not a little anxious to see the project carried into execution. Having got so far, I ventured to suggest to Cuthbert that there would in that case be no necessity for his leaving us; but Hutton's entrance into the room to mention that one of the housemaids, he was afraid, was sickening, set all doubt upon that question at rest; in fact, as it appeared to me, the preparations for the joint departure of Mrs. Brandyball, the girls, and Cuthbert were already far advanced, and that a regular communication had been kept up between

the high contracting powers, who for their own separate and particular reasons had resolved upon leaving Ashmead immediately, and leaving it altogether.

These girls were tired of us already, and as the mirthful noises and romps, in which they much rejoiced, would be of a necessity suspended for the next two or three weeks, they anticipated more of dulness and quietude during the rest of their stay than suited their tastes and genius; and this, added to the necessity of Mrs. Brandyball's return to her seminary by a particular day, concluded that faction in their resolve to decamp, having first undergone the preservative and preventive process which was to be universally inflicted by the skilful hand of Sniggs.

With respect to Cuthbert, kind as his professions were, and liberal as his conduct might be. I could not help observing an increase of that indifference towards Harriet which I had previously noticed in a slighter degree. Kitty's private consultations and conversations with her father-in law struck me to be somehow connected with this disagreeable change. And I could not help fancying that this invincible desire to leave Ashmead was in some degree attributable to the same influence. What I feared was, that the influence—powerful as it most unquestionably was—was not spontaneously exerted. I was alarmed lest its operations should be directed by the more matured judgment of Mrs. Brandyball. What her objects were, I could not exactly define, but I felt convinced that she had some point of first-rate importance to herself to carry, and I could not divest myself of the idea that she made Kitty the tool with which she might carry on her machinations.

To be candid, however, as one may be, at least when he writes for no eye but his own, I did not regret, in this particular instance, the success of the young lady's persuasiveness. To put Cuthbert to any inconvenience, would have given me the greatest pain and uneasiness; but he preferred leaving me—so far I had nothing to reproach myself with: and as for the removal of the rest of the party, nothing could be more agreeable. Accordingly, I submitted to his expressed will. Less than two hours were allowed for the packing of the carriage in which the travellers were to make their

journey. Four horses were ordered to be at the door at half past three, by which arrangement it was proposed that the party should reach Salisbury by seven or eight o'clock, where they were to sleep, Hutton and Cuthbert's other servant, with *their* luggage, filling Mrs. Brandyball's post-chaise, and bringing up the rear.

It was determined, moreover, that Tom should not be apprized of any of these arrangements, inasmuch as, if he had even quietly acquiesced in them, there must have been a parting, which would have defeated the main object of the flight. Sniggs therefore undertook to amuse the lad by performing various tricks of magic and conjuration in his room while my guests were getting under weigh.

Dr. Downey had resumed his close attendance upon my wife, whose side her affectionate mother had never once left since she came to her in the morning. Wells and Bessy had come over from the Rectory, and were just in time to take leave of the travellers; and within a few minutes of the proposed time, I received the parting kisses of Kitty and Jane, handed Mrs. Brandyball into the carriage, and shook hands with Cuthbert, feeling, I can scarcely tell why, a presentiment that I should never see him at Ashmead again. He seemed to me to have thrown himself—or rather, passively to have fallen—into the hands of strangers; and when he bid me farewell, he did not make the faintest allusion to Harriet, or express the slightest wish to hear the result of her confinement.

The subsequent scene with Tom is very remarkable. Sniggs having made himself excessively entertaining, suggested to Tom that if he liked to come to his house, to dine and sleep, while there was so much bustle going on at Ashmead, it would do him no harm, and there was no objection to his doing so. Tom jumped at the proposal: and Sniggs having taken the proper opportunity of sending for a hack chaise from the inn, charitably preferring the risk of infecting a public carriage, into which fifty strangers might in the next day or two be buttoned, to using any vehicle belonging to the family, wrapped the hopeful youth up in a great coat and cloak, and carried him off unresistingly to his residence in the High-street of Blissford; nor was it until the next

morning that Master Tom clearly understood the character of his visit there; he was then enlightened by the enforcement of the severe discipline which had at first been ordered, and clearly comprehended that he had been sent away from home on purpose to be out of the way. The rage and passion of the young gentleman exceeded all bounds, and it required main force and the intervention of a strong lock to keep him where he was. At length, however, as the disorder advanced, his spirit sank, and he continued to take the medicines which were prescribed, and not take the food which was proscribed, with a sulky sullenness which, if not more amiable, was at least more endurable than his violence.

At half-past seven o'clock on the evening of the departure of the amiable family and their charming friend, I became the father of a fine boy, pronounced by Mrs. Wells and the nurse to be as like me as possible. The Doctor looked pleased, and congratulating me with the greatest warmth, announced *that* which was the welcomest part of his important intelligence, that the mother and child were "as well as could be expected."

CHAPTER VII.

So, then, I am a father,—a new tie binds me to the world, and Harriet absolutely worships her infant. All is going on well. The house is perfectly quiet; even the canary-birds, unprovoked and unexcited, are mute. Still I occasionally hear a sound hitherto strange to Ashmead,—the shrill cry of my son and heir; he that, please God, is to be hereafter something good and great. How strange is such an anticipation! Only fancy that Dr. Johnson was once a baby; and that the height of my ambition would be to see that dear, little, soft, red thing upstairs, just such a man as he, in due course of time; but, to be sure, all

the babies I ever saw were soft, and red, and remarkably like their fathers, and so is mine.

This was the sort of soliloquy in which I was indulging when Mrs. Wells came to me in the garden to inquire, at Harriet's suggestion, whether I had written to announce the event to Cuthbert.

"Where am I to find him?" said I. "When he went away he said nothing about either my wife or my child. He left no address nor any direction where a letter might find him."

"That odious Mrs. Brandyball," said Mrs. Wells, "will no doubt be able to forward anything to him; and Harriet feels that it would be extremely wrong not to let him hear."

"She is quite right," said I; "but there is something extremely repugnant to my feelings in making Mrs. Brandyball the medium of such a communication."

"What else *can* you do?" said my prudent mother-in-law. "As the child is a boy, and as your brother has expressed his desire of standing godfather, it would be losing an excellent chance of a provision for him hereafter."

"That desire," said I, "was expressed before the sudden dispersion of the tribe; in all probability he has by this time forgotten it altogether; and as it is quite certain that we shall hear from some of them in the way of inquiry after Tom's health, I feel very much disposed to postpone the announcement until the opportunity offers of making it direct."

"Of course, my dear Gilbert," said Mrs. Wells, "you are master of your own house, and must do as you please."

Yes, thought I to myself, I feel more master of it than ever I did before: but this by no means disagreeable consciousness was not altogether without alloy. In the first place, the departure of Cuthbert had entirely changed the manners and customs of Ashmead, just at the very moment when, from being isolated myself, the alteration was made more manifest; and in the second place, the alteration was effected in an unpleasant manner;—in short, I was worried

and vexed at my own emancipation from the control I had so long felt irksome. What strange creatures we are!

"In *my* mind," said Wells, who had joined us, "your brother Cuthbert is snared,—as safe as a hare in a poacher's bag;—his *fanienti* disposition and almost helpless habits have no chance against the bustling activity of that Mrs. Brandyball, whose real character, thanks to our convivial reunion the other evening, we are tolerably well acquainted with."

"I am apprehensive——" said I.

"I go beyond you," replied Wells, "however, as my poor Fan used to say when I took leave to hint an occasional doubt about our late friend Merman's disinterestedness, it is of no use anticipating evils."

"Is there no chance," said I, "of that affair ever being on again?"

"I think not," said Wells. "Indeed, with all my avowed predilection for early marriages, I should not wish a daughter of mine to submit to caprice, or permit her affections to overcome what I consider the proper dignity of a woman's character. As to her taste with regard to the man, with that I have nothing to do. I was satisfied that a mutual attachment existed between them, and as I saw no objection to their marriage, I did not interfere with the courtship. When I thought it had continued quite long enough, I spoke to him on the subject indirectly—hypothetically——"

"Yes," said I; and all the scene in the old dining-parlour at the Rectory was re-enacted on my mind in a moment.

"And," continued Wells, "there was nothing in his conduct of which we have any right or reason to complain. He admitted the existence of the attachment, but pleaded his want of fortune as the reason of his continued silence on the subject; and when I ventured to throw out a hint as to the expectations he had mentioned to me, from his aunt Miss Malony, he for the first time confessed that her liberality was saddled with a condition which, as you know, must inevitably separate him from Fanny."

"There's the rub," said I.

"Yes," said Wells, "and although he ought unquestionably either to have communicated that contingency to me, or have made up his mind to marry upon the means he actually possesses, I can easily understand his unwillingness to bring an intimacy to a conclusion, in which, as he protests, the happiness of his life was engaged. He has now left Blissford, as he says, with the intention of softening his aunt's stern decree—that her money and her niece go together; but I told him that I considered the matter finally decided, as I felt it would be exceedingly repugnant to my daughter's feelings to induce the old lady to deprive her favourite relation of the portion she proposed to give her, even if I believed it at all likely that she would be induced so to do. I knew Fanny never would be happy if he succeeded; but I am certain that he will *not*, and so the less we say now of the Lieutenant the better. He intends to effect an exchange of duty, and join his regiment on service, probably taking his well-portioned lady with him as a wife."

"Surely," said I, who felt the greatest difficulty, with the best intentions, of conquering my first dislike to him, "surely he should have considered all this before——"

"Ay, ay," interrupted my father-in-law, "so he should, but he fancied himself in love; and then Gilbert, we all of us know that we are not quite so *clair-voyant* as we are at other times. However," continued he, "we must try and rouse Fanny from her 'doleful dumps.' Now we are all going on well here—your *charming* young nephew is thriving, and I mean to make up a little party, of which you must be one, to go to the exhibition of some most extraordinary artist, Mr. Delaville, who exhibits at our theatre to night, after the fashion of George Alexander Stevens, Dibdin, and those other great geniuses who, by dint of versatility of talent, contrive to amuse and delight an audience alone by themselves."*

"If Harriet is——"

"Harriet certainly can't be of the party," said Wells;

* At the time Mr. Gurney made these memoranda, the most eminent genius in that line, Matthews, had not adopted it.—ED.

"but my good kind wife will keep *her* company, and go you must. Sniggs tells me that the artist is capital—first chop, as the Chinese say; and Fan and Bessy, you and I, Sniggs himself, who is as good an audience as he is a performer, and some one or two others, will make a strong party in favour of the *entrepreneur*."

"Really," said I, "I am so worried about Cuthbert, so anxious about Harriet, and——"

"Can our interest be separate?" said the reverend patron of the entertainment. "No, no—you never had a child before, I have had many; I know the utter uselessness of moping about, a helpless animal—thinking, and wondering, and complaining about nothing. You come with us; the entertainment is called 'Frolics in Africa and Reflections at Home,' interspersed with songs, dances, imitations, and recitations, and all the other 'ations' in the world."

"Well, if Harriet gives me leave," said I——

"O my dear Gilbert," said the pastor, "that is rather too much of a joke. Give you leave!—why I think I know enough of her to know that she would feel pleasure in knowing that you were amused—so, if you will, come to us, or shall we come to you at seven?"

"Oh," said I, "dine *here*, and if we must go, let us start hence *en masse*."

"Why," said Wells, "fond as I admit myself to be of amusement in which I see no crime, I should not press this so much upon you if it were not for Fan—I am sure she broods over this sudden rupture with Merman, and if she can be diverted, I know it will do her good."

"You need say nothing more," said I, "I am perfectly ready to join you. I wonder we have not seen some of the bills of the performance."

"I have got those," said Wells; "and we will secure our places; and if we can but secure one or two hearty laughs, either with the performer or at him, my purpose will be fully answered."

"There I perfectly agree with you," said I, "and I thank my good stars that I am not particularly fastidious as to how the laugh is obtained. I am as great a fool at a pantomi when I was fourteen years old, and enjoy

the kickings and cuffings of Harlequin and Pantaloon with as much relish now as I did then."

Addison says it would be an endless task to mention the innumerable shifts that small wits put in practice to raise a laugh. Bullock in a short coat and Norris in a long one seldom fail of this effect. In ordinary comedies a broad and a narrow-brimmed hat are different characters. Sometimes the wit of a scene lies in a shoulder-knot, and sometimes in a pair of whiskers. A lover running about the stage with his head peeping out of a barrel, was thought a very good jest in King Charles the Second's time, and invented by one of the first wits of that age. What care I, if by some extravagance, some unaccountable absurdity, I am made momentarily to forget the things which prey upon my mind? I am satisfied;—and if Mr. Delaville, whose real name is in all probability Dobbs, Dobbins, or Doddle, diverts my thoughts from subjects which give me pain, I feel myself very much indebted to the said Dobbs, Dobbins, or Doddle, as the case may be. Voltaire says, that Providence has given us hope and sleep as a compensation for the many cares of life; to which Kate proposes to add "laughter," if the wit and originality of humour necessary to excite it among rational people were not so rare. Well, I was fairly in for the evening's entertainment; and, to say truth, not altogether sorry for it. And accordingly our arrangements were perfected and dinner ordered at an hour suitable to the time of the commencement of the performances, and we subsequently packed up and were on our road to the playhouse. The building to which we had been attracted was but of "pretensions humble and dimensions small." The genteel accommodation consisted of four boxes on either side and five in the front. The pit and gallery when we arrived might have boasted some five-and-twenty inhabitants. Three of the front boxes had in them some dozen of the bettermost neighbours, and our box and the stage-box opposite were well filled. On the stage and before the curtain stood a table covered with green baize, upon which were placed two candles, a bottle of water and a tumbler, and a kind of desk; behind it stood a chair. In those days little was known of the extent to which amusement could be

derived and entertainment ensued from so small a stock in trade; and accordingly we were not at all sparing in our jokes upon the unpromising appearance of things in general. Our attention, however, was attracted to the proscenium by the jingle of a piano-forte, concealed from sight, whereupon, at the ringing of a little bell, some hidden artist performed a somewhat familiar symphony, which was abruptly checked, like the story of the bear and fiddle, by a second similar "tintinabulary clatter." Up rose the curtain, and displayed the scene of a room and the end of the piano-forte, which we sagaciously conjectured was to be used as an accompaniment to the vocal effusions of the exhibiter. A momentary pause ensued, and the hero of the evening entered, dressed in a blue coat, white waistcoat, and black et-ceteras:—he came forward, bowed to the "judicious few" who were present, and proceeded to take his place behind the table.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said a voice, which, even if my sight might have been puzzled, never could deceive my ears, "in presenting myself to your notice, I fear that perhaps I am—"—here the eyes of the vivacious exhibitor glanced on me. I was gazing with astonishment at him: our looks met, and to the infinite astonishment of the audience, he burst into a violent fit of laughter: the disorder, as it luckily happened, communicated itself to the whole company, and for a minute or two everybody laughed, without knowing why or wherefore. The performer speedily resumed his composure, and went through a really entertaining part of his performance, which, although replete with copious quotations from Josephus Miller, and others of his erudite fraternity, was both spirited and amusing.

The moment the first part was over, I proceeded to the *coulisses*, and there, having shaken hands with the genius of the night, expressed considerable astonishment that, as he must have known of my residence in the place, he had not presented himself at Ashmead. He explained to me, however, that he did not know of my being established in the neighbourhood, and that he had himself not arrived more than an hour before the beginning of the performance, and that his astonishment at seeing me a witness of his

exhibition, threw him entirely off his guard, and produced the effect which seemed so mysterious to the "*general*."

That the performer was my once friend, once enemy, and since friend again, Daly, I need scarcely write down,—he had no time at that busy moment to give me any account of his adventures since we parted; but I made him promise to come up to breakfast on the morrow; and scarcely fancying the scene I had witnessed was real, I returned to my box to watch the progress and conclusion of the exhibition.

When we came back from the theatre, Wells and his two daughters proceeded to the Rectory, and I to my home,—having, however, received rather an unfavourable account of Tom, whose active cunning had been kept in full play, for the purpose of defeating all the attempts of his doctor and nurses in the way of medicine and regimen, and whose recent sulkiness had apparently been converted into practical irascibility by their efforts to control him. This increased my anxiety to write to Cuthbert; and I resolved that if no letter arrived from him by the next day's post, and Tom continued to go on unfavourably, I would do the *douce violence* to my feelings, and transmit a report of existing circumstances under cover to the governess, the designation which appeared to me to be equally applicable as regarded her influence over my brother, or her tutelage of his hopeful favourites. When I got back, I found Harriet progressing, as the Americans have it, most delightfully. Mrs. Wells's attentions were unremitting, and my gratitude was proportionably sincere. I mentioned that I expected a friend to breakfast, because, considering all the circumstances of my former acquaintance, connexions and entanglements with Daly, it did not appear to me particularly desirable that any portion of the Wells family should be of the party. The information produced the anticipated effect; Mrs. Wells would breakfast in Harriet's room, and I should be left as I desired, *tete-à-tete* with my extraordinary companion.

Daly was punctual, as I expected: he had acquired the air and manner of a gentleman not at all likely to be too late for any meal to which he might happen to be invited; and I received him with a natural warmth not at all quali-

fied by his change of appearance and station, but greatly mystified by finding him where and what he was, and I dismissed the servants as speedily as possible after the "things" were put down, in order to satisfy my curiosity upon the several most obscure points of his history.

"My dear fellow," said he, in answer to my first question as to the cause of his return from his African office, "I couldn't stand it. On my arrival in the internal place, I inquired what *this* building was?—the *late* Governor's house; what *that* building was?—that was the residence of the *late* Collector of Customs. They told me the *late* Secretary was one of the most agreeable men in the world, and that if I had only arrived before the two Judges, the Colonial Chaplain, and the Deputy Inspector of Hospitals had died, I should have found it an admirably agreeable, and sweetly sociable circle of society."

"Well," said I, "but I suppose as these functionaries died off, others succeeded them?"

"Exactly so," said Daly; "and by that very course of procedure, I lost my appointment. As things were going, and as the people were gone, I thought I might as well die with decency, like Cæsar, as live lowly; so down I sat myself, and wrote a letter to my patron, petitioning for promotion. No reply. Out comes a new cargo of officers, civil and military; for the climate is so uncertain, or rather so certain, that they generally send out functionaries as they do despatches, in triplicate—and I not noticed—at them again—made a grievance—complained of injustice—talked of my parliamentary interest in England—and wound up all, by distinctly stating that I would rather resign my office than continue to be oppressed."

"What effect had *that*?" said I.

"Quite the reverse from what I intended," said Daly; "a regular recoil; answer came, sure enough. What d'ye think it was? Two lines from an under-secretary;—they had taken me at my word. 'Have to acknowledge your letter (date so and so, stating so and so), and am directed by his Lordship to inform you that your resignation has been accepted, and Mr. Mumjunmy of Aldermanbury is appointed your successor.' Having resigned, no passage

was found me home—no pay there; so I have returned to my native land, which in itself is something—rather worse than I went, and have been forced to avail myself of my little trickeries which used formerly to delight the fashionable world in order to raise the supplies, and get to London with a few pounds in hand to keep the thing going till I can what we call turn round and look about me.”

“And does your scheme answer?” asked I.

“Never tried it but twice,” said Daly: “last night second appearance; you saw the result—as to finance, ‘a beggarly account of empty boxes’—as to the exhibition, ‘flat, stale, and unprofitable.’ The absurdities of an amateur are always rapturously received; but the moment a man is called upon to pay for his pleasures, he becomes critical overmuch; and although he declares himself ready to die with laughing at some gratuitous absurdity in a drawing-room, he would pronounce the same performance, if he had to ‘fork out,’ as uncommonly dull, and deucedly dear at the money.”

“Why, then, it does *not* answer?” said I.

“It answers,” replied Daly, “very much as the under-secretary of state did—unfavourably to my views, so I mean to discard the dramatic and take to the literary line. I have already made a bargain with a London bookseller to commence publishing a couple of volumes of ‘Travels in the Interior of Africa,’ which I have written, and of which, to tell you truth, I have brought a specimen in my pocket: these things, they tell me, sell admirably well now; and with half-a-dozen views and the portraits of a chief or two, will, I have no doubt, fetch the bibliopole a pretty penny; at least he thinks so by his offer. Here is my specimen—I will leave it with you till I start, for I shall be off this evening.”

“And did you mean to have passed through Blissford without paying me a visit?” said I.

“No,” said Daly, “not exactly that; but I think if I had known you were established here, I should not have passed through Blissford at all: owing to my late arrival I was not aware of it; and most certainly, whatever your surprise last night might have been at seeing *me* as a per-

former, mine at beholding you as audience was at least equal."

The expressed intention of Daly to leave his interesting manuscript with me till he started, implied a return to Ashmead in the after part of the day, for which I was not altogether prepared. Not but that, even after all that had passed, I should have been too happy to give him board and lodging for an indefinite term; but he was so uncertain, so mischievous, and so uncontrollable, that I did not feel safe in permitting the possibility of his starting off into an elaborated detail of *all* the events of the preceding years of our acquaintance. I resolved, if possible, to guard myself from the effects of such indiscretions by pleading a dinner-engagement at the Rectory; for it struck me that if I reduced my dinner at home, as I had already reduced my breakfast, to a *tête-à-tête*, he might, in the inevitable presence of the servants, indulge in some of those reminiscences, the very peculiarity of which would render them matters worth listening to, and make them valuable acquisitions to the archives of the housekeeper's room or servants' hall. Pondering, therefore, the least harsh mode of disentangling myself from a continuance of the unlooked-for association with my friend, I asked him whether he had lately heard of his better half.

I cannot describe the sensations which I felt when making this inquiry, associated as it was with the recollection of events at once so overwhelming and absorbing to myself, and contrasted as those events and everything connected with them were with the occurrences and pursuits of my present life. His answer was, that he had certainly heard of her, but the intelligence he had received was not of a nature to induce a belief that she was particularly interested in his fortunes or his fate.

"I should like your opinion on my manuscript," said Daly, with the pertinacious affection for his literary offspring so remarkable on the part of authors.

"And I should like to read it," said I; "but when do you leave this?"

"I fixed upon going this evening," said Daly; "but !

am not tied to time—to-morrow will answer my purpose just as well."

This forced me into a declaration my imaginary engagement.

"I am deucedly sorry," said I, "that I happen to have promised to dine at the Rectory with my father-in-law, else I should have been delighted if you would have dined here."

I said those very words, and said them, too, with real sincerity and truth, merely making a conditional reservation, the cause of which was Daly's own imprudence. I *should* have been truly delighted to have had him to dine, if I could have trusted him. Thus the fault, in fact, was his, not mine; and after all, the "being delighted" surely was not a less allowable *façon de parler* than "deeply regretting" the impossibility of accepting a disagreeable on account of a fictitious previous engagement; nor one bit worse than the absurdity of appending to a letter, in which one has indulged in the expression of the most contemptuous opinions and degrading epithets, the generally-adopted formulary—

"I have the honour to remain, Sir,

"Your most obedient, very humble servant."

"But," continued I, "if you will trust me with a portion of the manuscript which you have with you, it shall be faithfully returned to you this evening; indeed, I will send it back to you when I go to the Rectory."

"I think," said Daly, "you will find it interesting—very little of the interior is known, after all; but—if—as your literary talents are generally recognised—you should see any errors, either in style or language, perhaps you would do me the kindness to use a correcting hand?—that's all."

I promised—disclaiming at the same time any of the qualifications which Daly ascribed to me—to read the book with all due attention, feeling at the same time, a strong desire to make myself, in some degree, better acquainted with the state of my friend's finances. That they were low he had confessed, but I did not feel myself at liberty to inquire if I could be of any assistance, nor indeed did I

doubt, considering all our foregoing acquaintance, that he would hesitate to constitute me his banker, if he considered it necessary ; still there appeared in his manner a sort of restlessness and nervousness, which communicated themselves to me, and I felt, I scarce knew why—an immoderate anxiety for his departure.

I dreaded a visit from Sniggs while Daly was with me—he would not only recognise the lion of the preceding night, but would no doubt strike up an intimate acquaintanceship with him, and, by a sympathetic interchange of *facetiæ* detain him at Ashmead perhaps till luncheon—perhaps he might be the bearer of some message from Wells, whom I knew he was to see upon parish business at eleven, which might overthrow in an instant all my well-arranged history of my engagement. However, at last after he had done ten thousand things as I thought, purposely tending to delay his departure, Daly went leaving me his manuscript, of which I considered it my duty to read a certain part, and forming my judgment of the whole by some favourable sample, return it, as I had promised before dinner. I wished him farewell—begged him to write to me when he was fixed in London—and assured him of my perfect readiness to be of use to him whenever or however I might be able. Yet when he was out of sight I reproached myself with not having put my offer more explicitly, and volunteered some immediate assistance. The truth is, I was confused and worried, and thrown off my guard, and I really believe it would have been better not to have invited him at all to Ashmead, than have treated him as I did—without being able to avoid it.

When he was gone, I hastened to Harriet's room, and as I never concealed a thought or a wish from her, explained to her the necessity I felt for avoiding Daly, by dining at her father's—an explanation scarcely necessary, because I had long before told her the whole history of my former adventures with him, even to the episode of my infatuation about Emma. My dear little woman perfectly agreed with me in my views on the subject, and I accordingly wrote to the Rector, to announce my intention, and received, as usual, a kindly welcome to his hospitable house.

Having done which, I sat myself down to peruse the papers of my volatile friend, in order that they might be punctually restored to him before his departure, which, unencouraged by me to remain where he was, he had positively fixed for that evening, per mail, if there should be a place for him when it arrived.

I untied the packet, and having skimmed the three preliminary chapters, which were occupied in describing the town in which he had been located and its environs, its different institutions and offices, all of which I had previously read about, I passed on to the account of Daly's journey into a part of the interior, which, according to his statement, had never been visited before.*

Daly, having travelled upwards of one hundred and sixty miles, without meeting with any considerable impediment or remarkable adventure, arrived on the 15th of April at the town of Basfoodo, the residence of the king of the Gummangoes. He then proceeds with his journal :—

“I was accompanied by my own servant, Richard Evans; Woolpoo, an intelligent negro who had joined us at Mamfoz; Faz and Borjee, two boys; and a guide. At Basfoodo we were well received, contrary as it appeared to me, to the expectations of my conductor. The king, a man of great intelligence, who spoke the Gummango language with peculiar sweetness, made numerous inquiries as to the objects I had in view. Woolpoo acted as interpreter: and, after an hour's talk, the king ordered me some qualch, a dish made of horseflesh and melted butter. I contrived to eat some of it, because I was given to understand it was considered a great luxury, and, being sent by the king, it would have been thought disrespectful if I had not partaken of it.

“I was conducted to a hut which had been prepared for me by the king's order, where there were several extremely large women waiting to give me tamarinds and rice, which

* Since Mr. Gurney's papers were written, a vast number of lives have been lost in various attempts to penetrate into the interior of Africa, an object never to be attained, and which ought never again to be attempted, without a military force adequate to the protection of the brave and enterprising individuals who may be yet found willing to repeat the experiment.

they had brought with them. They were accompanied by five or six Pungahs, who appeared to be their daughters, who diverted me much by their grotesque dances. Oggenou Bow Ting, whom I soon discovered to be the king's favourite minister, told me that he had ordered plenty of milk-and-water for my horses; but when I ventured to express an intention of quitting Basfoodo early the next morning, he assumed a somewhat authoritative manner, and said, 'Betnot, betnot,' three or four times. The strong resemblance of his caution in the Gummango language to the English word, 'better not,' struck me as remarkably curious. In the morning, however, I took leave of the king, who seemed quite grieved to part with me; indeed, I could not prevail upon him to let me quit him, till I had soothed his regrets by giving him a double-barrelled gun, a gold-laced waistcoat, a cocked hat, and a musical snuff-box. His minister seemed to expect something for himself; but when I mounted my horse, and saw that he and two or three of the subordinates were making preparations to follow me, I repeated the word 'Betnot,' which he had himself used the night before, and they gave up the design.

"On the 18th we set out, and, although the road was stony, we reached Pagdouri by nine, where we breakfasted. This is a small village on the side of a hill on the banks of a clear stream. We had rice and milk for breakfast. About twelve we moved on gently. As we were proceeding, a young goat crossed our path, which had evidently strayed from its mother. Woolpoo advised our catching and killing it. This was accordingly done, and Faz was intrusted with the care of carrying it.

"From this spot we could discover a very lofty ridge of mountains, ranging from N.E. to S.W. None of my companions could give me any information respecting them, except that they were called Bogieminicombo, which I believe to mean the Devil's small-tooth comb. I made a sketch of this wonderful chain, to which the reader is referred. About a mile beyond this, we met two women and three children. They seemed remarkably fond of their offspring. They offered us milk, and a composition which the natives call tatumaroo; its savour was not agreeable, and, not being

able to understand exactly what it was made of, I declined it but gave some glass beads to the children and a Paris-macé pincushion to each of the mothers. The soil here assumed a new appearance; it consisted of good red earth, with some flourishing vegetables. One old man showed us his garden, in which tobacco was growing. I plucked one of the leaves and nodded my head, which seemed to give him much pleasure.

“In the evening we reached Agabagadoo, a place of considerable importance, containing not less than two hundred and fifty inhabitants. Here we cooked our goat; and Woolpoo desired Waggumedd, an old chief to whom he was known, to desire one or two of his wives to get a warm bath ready for me, which they did, and I felt greatly refreshed by it;—indeed, nothing conduces more speedily to restore and re-invigorate a weary traveller than the warm bath. After supper we had some dancing to the sound of a drum, which is a hollow cylinder, over the top of which is strained a piece of calf’s skin. It is beaten on the top with one, and occasionally two, sticks, which produce a hollow but not altogether disagreeable sound. It lightened very much during the evening. I ate some tamarinds; and at nine we all retired to rest, but I could not sleep on account of the heat.

“In the morning I was better, and Woolpoo brought me some lapsuac, a dish made of minced fish and rice. The butter used in this country is a vegetable product, derived from the fruit of the Cé and Nédé. We travelled nearly eleven miles this day, and met a man of some importance, taking his daughter with him to Agabagadoo, as Woolpoo said, to be married. He had tied a rope round her left leg, and fastened it round his own waist. He appeared very much amused at our commiserating the poor girl’s sufferings, and said ‘Kinki, kokki, nogo,’—the precise meaning of which Woolpoo could not interpret, but which I understood to signify that if he had not taken the precaution we noticed, his Pungah would not have been induced to go the journey.

“This afternoon we crossed a pretty river, which Woolpoo informed me fell into a larger one, the name of which he

did not recollect. The water was very clear; so that, not being deep, we could distinctly see the bottom in many places. I here noticed several fish swimming in the stream, which appeared to me very closely to resemble the *Gasterosteus aculeatus*; but I was unable to satisfy myself upon this point from the rapidity with which they fled at our approach, and the difficulty of catching any of them—a circumstance which I deeply regret. At night we reached Fazelon, where we had a very comfortable supper of cushmakoo, composed of fowl boiled to rags mixed up with oil, tamarinds, and a sweet jam called suckee. I found this, when seasoned with pepper and salt, and well moistened with goats' milk, a remarkably nice dish.

“One of the Fushdous, or priests, came into our hut, and, having regaled himself, proposed to accompany us the next day, in order to point out to us the Pitsi Bow, or Sacred Well, which was consigned to his care; he left us late, with a promise to return early, but he did not make his appearance; and when I awoke, I missed my silver snuff-box. I suggested to Woolpoo the necessity of applying to the chief of the village for restitution; but I was met again with the words ‘Betnot.’ So I put up with my loss with the best possible grace.

“Having lost my snuff-box, I was certainly not very favourably disposed towards the race of Fushdous, whom I subsequently found were not regular priests of the Hoggamogadoos, but a proscribed race who were constantly endeavouring to make a revenue for themselves by exhibiting the Pitsi Bow, and who were consequently glad to lay their hands upon any tangible object. Having waited for this faithless professor of what appeared to be an unorthodox sect, till the sun was nearly up, we recommenced our interesting progress. At Piliivinipou, a small town not remarkable for any peculiar feature, and containing about seventy-two inhabitants, we halted. The wind was westerly: wild roses and olives were seen during the morning, and Woolpoo showed me a mulberry, which, although unripe, was very satisfactory.

“On the 31st, Evans, my servant was taken ill; we, of course, halted at Twiddeo, and every attention was shown

him. The Pimesonso or chief of Twiddeo, sent him some qualch, and I recommended him some pulv. rad. jalapii. Whether the horse-flesh or the medicine succeeded the better, I cannot say. On the 1st, Evans was convalescent, and, although several of the Bonjies of the place seemed quite satisfied that he must die, he was able to continue the journey mounted upon one of my she-asses. I certainly think I may with safety say, that at the period at which I now write, I have achieved an object of the highest possible importance to all the civilized world. Woolpoo brought me to-day a man, evidently of deep erudition; for although I did not understand the Gorooga language (for we had now entered that most important kingdom), he made me comprehend his meaning; and from him I gathered, what I consider unquestionable evidence of the fact, that the river which I crossed nine days since was the Runamunaboo, and that (although Woolpoo then forgot the name of that to which it was a tributary stream) it actually falls into the great Pedee. This important fact, if properly substantiated, will infallibly settle the question as to the direction in which the Pedee runs. Subjoined is a map of the country through which these rivers flow, supposing my conclusions to be correct.

“The day after we left Twiddeo we reached the romantic town of Humshug, where we met with a very kind reception from the Bongeywag. Humshug is situate about fourteen miles N. W. from Calliwou—there is nothing particularly interesting in the *trajet*. I observed, however, several interesting specimens of *Alsine* and *Urtica*, of which I availed myself, but which I regret to say I was not able to bring to England. Plate 34 will, however, afford a pleasing recollection of these interesting novelties. I considered it necessary to give the Bongeywag some mark, not only of my personal esteem, but of the regard in which his character was held in England. I therefore presented him with a six-bladed Sheffield knife, and a cornelian necklace; he was much gratified, and insisted upon giving me several cocks and hens, and a goat.

“We took leave of Humshug with great regret, and, pursuing our way by the side of the river, or rather rivulet, Pewennac, reached the beautiful village of Fantod, just in

time to accept of the hospitality of the chief, who not only treated me and my people with great kindness, but favoured me with a sort of vocabulary which I found of great use afterwards, and which I have thought it right in part to communicate to my readers.

" Humbo wag.	How do you do
Pooley frou dowwz.	Pretty well.
Swigglee mogou.	Give me something to drink.
Swinkee sou.	I am hot.
Mombro mullygrubou.	I am ill.
Tatifatitooroo.	Send for a 'Tackafee (doctor).
Umbi widdéeou.	It rains.
Bumburirombleeboo.	Thunder.
Fiz.	Lightning.
Wadawantou.	How much do you ask ?
Coodleadoo.	I love you.
Gitouto	Go away.
Kisnice.	A lover.
Rooretooro.	A wheelbarrow."

Having read so much of the vocabulary, I turned over a few pages, and came to this—"The next day we saw several goats," &c.

When I had read thus far, I felt, oddly enough, a somewhat powerful inclination to sleep; indeed, it grew so strong, that the manuscript fell from my unconscious hand upon the table, and by its fall, awakened me to a "sense of my situation." I had already read the accounts of several similar expeditions, and had, I admit, uniformly felt the same symptoms; but as, by Daly's statement, he had disposed of the copyright of his work to an eminent London publisher, I felt rather ashamed this time of being unable to keep myself alive to its interest.

One thing in a considerable degree consoled me, I should not be obliged to deliver a *vivâ voce* opinion of the production; nor, indeed, could I, with justice, give any opinion at all, since the chief merit of such a book consists in its correctness and truth. I accordingly refolded the manuscript, tied it up, and sealed it; and enclosing a note, thanking him for the perusal, which had given me much pleasure,

directed it (as he desired) to Mr. Delaville, Kings Head Inn, and having caused it to be deposited in the pony phaeton, proceeded, first to take leave of my dear Harriet and her amiable mother, and then to drive to the Rectory, where I had no objection to pass half an hour before our family dinner.

Off I went, with my mind fuller of Cuthbert's neglect to my wife than anything else, revolving also my scheme of writing the next day, if I did not hear; and, thus occupied, reached the well-known door of Wells's residence. I ordered the phaeton at ten; and while depositing my cloak in the hall, heard the billiard-balls at work. This satisfied me that Sniggs was to be of the party; so, directing James to leave the parcel at the King's Head, I entered the billiard-room, where I found the reverend Rector acting marker at the fire-place, while Sniggs was struggling desperately to get up with Daly, *who was his antagonist, and had scored fourteen to nine of the game.*

CHAPTER VIII.

THE astonishment which for a moment overwhelmed me at the sight of Daly, vanished in the next, when I recollected who the performer was, and what his character; indeed, it only served to assure me that his original and genuine spirit of enterprise, tolerably well exemplified by his public exhibition of the preceding evening, had been in no degree weakened or debased by his "foreign travel," but had rather come, from the purification of African heat, even stronger and brighter than it was when first submitted to that test.

"Capital player, Mr. Delaville," said Sniggs, who had put on his glasses to execute the delicate touches in which he excelled.

"I need not introduce you to my son-in-law," said Wells to Daly

"I flatter myself not," said Daly, continuing his play with an earnestness which convinced me he was not playing for love, which, in a sporting phraseology, means, *nothing*. "A cannon and red hazard—five—score me five, Domine—how much is that—nineteen to eleven—and a hard game—what are the odds? Chalk, Domine, if you please—I am going to give you the regular Phillimore screw."

"Domine!" said I to myself; "has he already got upon such familiar terms with my reverend and revered Socer to call him Domine?"

"There's a stroke, Mr. Sniggs!" exclaimed Daly, after having, by dint of chalk and confidence, twisted the ball half round the table; "take your change out of *that*: now for the cannon, just so—two and three are five, and five and nineteen are twenty-four—at least in *my* country—game! Thirteen and sixpence, Sniggs."

I stood amazed, wondering whether the "Domine" would order my facetious friend out of the house, or "Sniggs" knock him down with the cue; but neither of these by *me* expected events occurred. Sniggs, who was certainly out of play, and seemed to me equally out of spirits, surrendered the implement of his art to Wells, who was to take up the conqueror.

"I am extremely glad you are come," said Sniggs to me; "I am beginning to get rather fidgetty about Tom. He has contrived not only to shirk taking any of the medicine which I made up for him, but has managed to make himself master of two bottles of cherry-bounce of Mrs. S.'s own manufacture, which were inadvertently left in a cupboard in his bed-room. The contents of one of these, and more than half of those of the other, he has swallowed. The result has been a terrible accession of fever, and occasional delirium, and his appearance is, I assure you, extremely alarming. I should have been at Ashmead now, if I had not heard that you were expected here at dinner."

"And is there any eventual danger to be anticipated?" asked I.

"It is impossible to say," replied Sniggs; "I have left him in the care of my young man, and I hope he may get

a little rest ; but there's no knowing what may happen if we are not able to overcome the inflammation."

"If anything fatal were to occur," said I, "it would kill my poor brother ; and then his being left here—and—"

"No blame can attach to *you*," said Sniggs : "you are strictly prohibited from visiting him."

"Yes, thought I, that's very true ; but blame attaches somewhere, and it is not very difficult to say where—the idea of leaving such a tempting potation within reach of the hopeful lad, whose love of any thing "black, sweet, and intoxicating" was remarkable, combined with his hatred of physic, and a determination to do all the mischief he could at the apothecary's house (his removal to which he considered a barbarous and degrading banishment) seemed to me preposterous. If his death should result from such negligence, it could scarcely be considered accidental or natural ; and from the peculiar twist of Snigg's countenance, I felt assured that, however much he might try to conceal his real opinion of the case, it was in fact ominously unfavourable.

"I shall step home immediately after dinner," said Sniggs, "and see how he is going on. I told Mr. Tibbs to send the instant he fancied him growing worse ; but by the evening we shall be better able to judge."

The intelligence of the worthy leech, and the tone in which it was conveyed filled my mind with serious apprehensions, and hindered me from making immediate inquiries, as to the cause and manner of Daly's introduction and presence at the Rectory. Wells was one of those liberal-minded men of the Church who was ever ready to patronize merit in whatever profession he found it ; and having known that I had gone behind the scenes to speak to Daly—or rather Delaville, for although he had breakfasted with *me* as Daly, he was at the Rectory under his *nomme-de guerre*—the invitation was probably the act of the Rector himself. By whatever means it had been achieved, it was to me a most embarrassing circumstance, and I now regretted that I had not pressed him to stop and dine with me, which the willingness with which he

had subsequently postponed his departure to dine with Wells, showed me that it was quite clear he would have done. I felt that I could have managed him so much better in my own house, and that Wells at Ashmead would have had fewer opportunities of making inquiries into his earlier life, and of giving him the opportunity of dilating upon our former intimacy, and the numerous curious circumstances and occurrences therewith connected. I had, in fact, outwitted myself: however, I do not think the most imaginative anticipator would ever have foretold the probability or even possibility of my finding my friend and foe, my "bane and antidote," domesticated in my father-in-law's house, in less than four-and-twenty hours after his arrival in Blissford, and addressing him and his companion by the affectionate epithets of Domine and Sniggy.

This event, which at any other time would have of itself sadly discomposed me, and made me wretchedly nervous, became, however, of secondary importance when I revolved in my mind the probable consequences of what I began to think would be the probable result of Tom's illness. From a false pride I had omitted writing to Cuthbert to give him an account of his health; and Cuthbert, in his love of ease, availing himself of the future opportunity of justifying his silence by a declaration that he had been waiting to hear from *me*, had pursued a precisely similar line of conduct.

Before I left home I had, as I have already recorded, resolved that, whatever my feelings about Mrs. Brandyball and her influence might be, all delicacy upon that point was to be overcome; and I had accordingly determined to write by to-morrow's post. What Sniggs had communicated rendered this duty doubly imperative: and the best thing I could do, under existing circumstances, would be, to delay till the last moment permitted by the post-office to forward my account of Tom, perfectly satisfied in my own mind, that let the consequences of the carelessness of Mr. or Mrs. Sniggs, or both of them, as the case might be, be what they might, they would be visited upon *me* to the fullest extent of Cuthbert's vengeance.

And to what might this not reach? It was true Cuthbert had made me, to a certain degree, independent, and I occupied a place in society which many men, greatly my superiors in rank and fortune, might reasonably envy, and which, at all events, enabled me to envy nobody; but all this comfort and enjoyment was—at least to a very considerable extent—derivable from, and dependent upon, the will and pleasure of my brother; at least, without meaning a pun, my present possession of it was the result of his pleasure, and its permanency would entirely depend upon his will.

I was satisfied that if Tom should unfortunately die, that very circumstance would consummate Mrs. Brandyball's triumph. She would, of course, irritate Cuthbert, enlarge upon our inhumanity, and in short, carry her great point of securing the entire guardianship and control of the girls; in order to do which, with the greater show of propriety and independence, she would unquestionably become the second Mrs. Cuthbert Gurney. That event would, with equal certainty, more especially considering the unfortunate incident which brought it about, divert the current of my poor brother's bounty and liberality into new channels, and I might suddenly find myself left with Ashmead on my hands, without the means of living in it, or keeping it up. It may easily be imagined that with all these prospects for the future in my mind's eye, and the dread that Daly would indulge the company, in the course of the day, with details of the past, my position and feelings were anything but agreeable.

"Tom," said Wells, "is, I hear, worse to-day?"

"Yes," said I, "I am deucedly sorry he is."

"Are you?" said Daly; "that won't do,—no, my dear Gilbert, I have heard the story—happen to know, as Hull says—never tell me that a man can be sorry for a fellow who is likely to stand in his way—nine to six"—still playing on. "I once knew a man, and a capital fellow too, who was in remainder to a title and a fortune, with nobody between but a consumptive cousin of five years old—eleven to six—and what d'ye think he did, Sniggs?"

"Can't say," said Sniggs.

"Goes to the family apothecary—two more, that's thirteen—and says, 'what a fine healthy boy that Ferdinand Alphonso is!'"

"'Healthy!' cries the apothecary; 'sickly, you mean?'"

"'On the contrary,' cries the heir-presumptive, 'I mean healthy.'"

"The apothecary shook his head

"'Well,' said the heir-presumptive, 'I tell you what I'll do—you attend him constantly, and ought to know—but I'll bet you a thousand guineas to one he is alive this day twelvemonth.'"

"The doctor jumped at the bet, and before six months were over, the Baron Ferdinand Alphonso was settled all safe and snug in the family vault, and the heir-presumptive in full possession."

"Do you mean to say—"said Sniggs.

"Nothing," replied Daly; "only that the medical man was the best judge, and was quite right in backing his opinion. Now, if Tom,—what d'ye call your invalid connexion?—were to fall in with a medical man who entertained so bad an opinion of his case, I should say—psha! that's a miss—score one—I should say betting the castor out would be very pretty sport."

Wells looked somewhat surprised, and Sniggs appeared extremely indignant.

"La," said Daly, "medical matters are often brought to bettings. Did you never hear the story of the fit and the bleeding—it's as old as the hills—not the Hulls—eh Gilbert?"

"Not to my knowledge," said I.

"Gad, sir," said Daly, "Will Witley, an old friend of mine, was standing one day at the window at White's, and down he fell in a fit, as flat as a flounder. Sir Harry Liptrap offered three hundred to two that he would die. 'Done,' said Lord Bendamere. 'Done,' cried Liptrap. And done and done it was. The nearest apothecary had been sent for on the instant:—in he came post-haste—looked at Will—and whipped out his lancet in the twinkling of an eye—

"'Mind what you are at, sir,' said Sir Harry to the

doctor; if you bleed *that* gentleman, and he recovers, you'll pay my three hundred to Lord Bendamere. I backed Nature out at three to two; but I did not bet upon Art.'

"Whether the apothecary were frightened, or whether he bled the patient, I can't say," said Daly; "but Will Witley is alive and merry at this moment to tell the story, and the Jockey Club had to 'settle the difference.'"

"Your humane suggestion," said I to Daly, "is at once so gratifying to *me*, and so complimentary to Mr. Sniggs, that it would scarcely be worth trying. The poor boy of whom we are talking is no heir presumptive, nor does he stand in my way, except that by his death, if it should unfortunately happen, I am likely to lose whatever my poor brother might otherwise have been disposed to leave me in case of my surviving him. However, let us hope for the best."

A summons to dinner terminated the conversation; but I thought I began to perceive that Wells was not quite delighted with his new visiter, who had, it appeared, made good his landing, by having accosted the Rector in the Blissford library, and having proclaimed his old friendship for me, and a perfect recollection of my father-in-law's father, whom he said had been an intimate friend of his uncle John's. To *me*, perfectly acquainted as I was with my friend's "facilities," this ancient friendship was somewhat problematical; and when Wells was describing the circumstance of Daly's self-introduction to him—encouraged, however, by a good-natured recognition on the part of the Rector—he evidently overheard us; and the twinkle of his eye, and the motion of his mouth, convinced me that Uncle John, if he ever existed, (which, as I never had previously heard of him, I very much doubted,) knew no more of our host's respectable father than I did.

Things, I must confess, all turned out badly upon this particular day. When Wells invited Daly to dine with him, he had not received a very curious letter from Lieutenant Merman, upon which he was desirous of consulting *me*, and which promised, under certain circumstances, very much to alter the position, and, eventually, the state of his daughter Fanny. I saw that his mind was occupied by some subject

of importance, and that neither his playing nor his marking was done attentively; and although I was not prepared to hear what he subsequently told me respecting the gallant officer's communication, I felt perfectly assured that his thoughts were not on what he was doing. The consequence of all these "cross purposes" was, that Wells, instead of being cheerful "as usual," and full of anecdote, was dull and restless, and neither encouraged Daly in his drolleries, nor laughed when he made an effort, and volunteered a joke. Sniggs was fidgetty about Tom, and so was I, and the result was that which is by no means unfrequent in society, the "merry men all," when brought together, were as dull and gentlemanly as possible.

One anecdote Daly gave us, which made Wells smile, but the rather, I believe, because he knew the hero of the tale, or, at least, the hero as Daly told it, for it did not appear to me quite impossible that my friend might have heard Wells speak of the reverend personage upon whom he fathered it. Sniggs had been describing the various *tracaseries* of poor Tom Falwasser during his confinement at his house; and amongst other things, told us that his restlessness was such that he never could get him to lie still, even when rest would be most advantageous.

"Gad!" said Daly, "that only shows the difference of dispositions; perhaps age had something to do with it—an old friend of mine, Doctor Doldrum, of Dorchester—rich—snug—snug incumbent of a fine fat living, and a bachelor, was regularly hunted by the old maids and widows of his neighbourhood. They were sure he would find a wife such a comfort.—His house only wanted a lady to take care of it,—and accordingly he was never left at rest upon this important topic. One however of these anxious creatures took the lead of the others: and when he once happened to be seized with a somewhat serious illness, resolved upon nursing him, which she did most assiduously—ay, and kindly too. He began to recover; but the listlessness of fever hung about him; and although his doctors ordered him to get up every day, there he lay, indolent and weak, and so he went on for a week or more, without once leaving his nest.

"Pray try and get up, Doctor," said the attentive Mrs

Mantrap. "I am too weak, Ma'am," said the Doctor, "I will try to-morrow." "Fine day," said Mrs. Mantrap, "beautiful breeze—let Thomas wheel you into the garden?"

'I can't Ma'am," said the Doctor; "I'm too weak." "Do, Doctor?" "No, Ma'am, no," said Doldrum. "Dear me, dear me," said Mrs. Mantrap, losing patience with her patient, "will nothing make you get out of your bed?" "No, Ma'am," said the Doctor, with a deep sigh and a look of despair—"nothing—except, indeed, your getting into it."

"This *brusquerie* broke off the acquaintance, and Doldrum died in a state of 'single blessedness.'"

This, however, I regret to say, was, if not the first, the last bit of merriment of the day; for just as Daly had finished his anecdote, looking himself as grave as a judge, a message from Sniggs's young gentleman, Mr. Tibbs, took him away before the time at which we had intended to go. We were—at least Wells and I—considerably agitated by the sudden manner in which the message was announced; and I—full to a certain degree of a kind of internal superstition—anticipated the worst. Wells, who saw what was passing in my mind, and knowing that I was specially prohibited from even entering the apothecary's house, followed Sniggs, promising to bring me an authentic account of poor Tom's state; and thus, in no humour for such a scene, I was left for a short time *tête-à-tête* with Delaville Daly or Daly Delaville, whichever it best suited himself to be. "Sibthorpe Hopkins, or Hopkins Sibthorpe."

"Odd, isn't it?" said he, when Wells was fairly out of hearing—"deuced odd, that 'we should be both here together,' as the new song says? Wells is a capital fellow—liked him the moment I saw him—always have a respect for the cloth—especially when a dinner is in the way. You told me you were coming here; so, thinks I to myself, I'll just pave the way and meet him—did it in my best style."

"You seem to have done so," said I, in a tone and manner which must have practically convinced the yet untamed mad-cap that I had very materially altered my views of life and society.

"Never see a Domine," said Daly, "but I think of the

horrid tricks we used to play Carbo Cockletop, the curate or Cranberry, where I was at all the school I ever had—we called him Carbo, because he looked like a Wallsend polished—devout but dirty, poor dear fellow! Amiable, confiding, dim-eyed, and dignified, if not in his profession, certainly in his manner; he had a fashion of throwing himself with a magisterial air backwards on the seat in the pulpit after his preliminary prayer. Upon that seat did I regularly do hen's work every Sunday."

"Hen's work?" said I gravely, and really not comprehending him.

"Yes," said Daly—"hen's work. Every Sunday, there and upon that velvet cushion did I lay an egg, and as regularly did poor Carbo Cockletop carry on the process of incubation to a certain degree by sitting on it—falling gracefully upon his seat without looking before, or rather behind him, down he went—squash went the egg, and so absorbed was he in the might of his own majesty, that, like an heroic general in a different field of action, he never heard the bursting of the shell, nor took any notice of the event. But when the sermon was over, and Carbo came down to make the amiable amongst his congregation, the effect of the squash upon the back of his shining canonicals was good—the field sable and the egg proper were beautiful heraldry; and homeward he walked, wholly unconscious of the absurdity of his appearance. And this did I seven consecutive Sundays with undiminished success."

"Ah," said I, "such things I could have laughed at once: but——"

"I perceive," said Daly, "things are altered since I was behind the parson, and you have been before him; however, I am a Benedict too—eh?—thank your lucky stars!"

"I hope," said I, "that your prospects will brighten. I am sure your book ought to secure you money and reputation. I only wonder how you, with *your* habits, could have undergone the fatigues and privations incidental to such a journey as that which you have so accurately detailed."

"Fatigues!" said Daly; "privations!"—why, my dear Gilbert, you don't suppose I ever went to any of the place

I describe—not a bit of it! I never was out of the infernal town, which, I wish to my heart, I never had been in, except as I remember my visits to Sir Frank Blazeaway the commodore, in his frigate. Frank is as fine a fellow as ever stepped—fights like a devil, and drinks and plays as well as he fights.”

“My dear Daly,” said I, “all these things are very well in their way, but you ought to reflect——”

“What, as my looking-glass does when I shave,” said Daly, “to warn me how time creeps on—or rather gallops? No, I hate reflection, Gilbert. ‘Sufficient for the day be the evil thereof;’ and although some great man, I forget his name at the moment—no matter—says, ‘He that never looks back will never gain wisdom enough to look forward,’ I go no further than the present——”

“But the book,” said I; “how do you reconcile the calling it your journey into the interior?”

“‘Tis mine, ’twas his,” said Daly, “and I hope will ‘be slave to thousands.’ I talked to a man who *had been* there, or somewhere else, and I read other men’s books of travels. I knew *they* had never been where they said they had been; and I consider a matter-of-fact detail made off-hand is a work of infinitely greater ingenuity than the common-place report of an actual journey. Rely upon it, my qualch will become a fashionable dish before a twelve-month is over our heads, and I shall be lionised all over London for having caught a glimpse of the Bogiemini-combo Mountains, which were never discovered, and having ascertained the direction in which a river that nobody ever heard of does not run.”

“I hope you may, but——”

“Oh,” said Daly, “you are sceptical—you have pulled up and are steady—I must continue dashing at something. True, my creditors are not dead, but they must be pacified. I can’t kill myself a second time, and ‘take the benefit of the act’—I mean of innocent suicide—the knob on my nose is too well known now. Still, *nil desperandum* is my motto; and I back myself three to two, like the winner at White’s, that I fall on my legs—at least as long as I have a plank left to stand upon.”

‘Exactly so,’ said I, not forgetting what I had seen some years before at the Old Bailey; ‘but now,’ I continued, really anxious about him, and feeling rather glad that I had an opportunity of offering him some assistance which I had not done in the morning, ‘what do you really and seriously propose?’

His answer was checked by the return of Wells, the expression of whose generally cheerful countenance told me better than words, that matters looked badly with the invalid.

‘The boy is dying,’ said Wells; ‘he is delirious, and Sniggs is convinced an effusion on the brain will take place. Nothing can be worse.’

‘Nothing, indeed,’ said I. ‘This will be a dreadful blow to us all; and, to say the truth, I do not think when the case comes to be looked into, that Sniggs will get much credit on the score of carefulness, in allowing such a patient access to strong spirits like cherry brandy.’

‘Especially,’ said Daly, who would rather lose ten friends than one joke, however good the one and however bad the other—‘especially a boy whose addiction to *bounce* was notorious.’

‘Ah, Mr. Delaville,’ said Wells, ‘those who have never suffered an affliction of this sort may jest upon it: for *my* part, I am sure you will forgive me; I had hoped to pass an agreeable day and evening with you and my son-in-law; but this most unexpected calamity presses upon us dreadfully, and I think that Gilbert and I ought to go to Ashmead, where the news, if anything fatal *does* occur, would perhaps abruptly reach his wife, and produce the most serious consequences.’

‘I agree with you,’ said I to Wells: ‘and I am sure, my dear Daly——’

‘Daly!’ said Wells. ‘Delaville, I thought.’

‘Ay,’ said I, ‘his travelling name; but——’

‘Daly!’ repeated the Rector, somewhat emphatically. ‘Surely you are not *the* Mr. Daly of whom I have heard Gilbert so frequently talk?’

‘The same *in propria personâ*,’ said Daly, making a theatrical bow, ‘and very much at your service.’

I saw that the Rector was very much surprised, and fancied that he was a little angry. This vexed me, because I feared that I should be implicated as a party to the deception with regard to my *friend's* assumed name. However, as I had neither brought him to the Rectory, nor invited him thither, but, on the contrary, had left my own house in order to avoid him; I felt, also, that I could explain away my share of the business during our walk to Ashmead: upon which Wells seemed more positively resolved, after discovering whom his guest really was, than he was before.

"I shall make no apology, Mr. Daly," said Wells, "for wishing you a good evening: so old a friend of my son-in-law will, I am sure, not require ceremony."

"Assuredly not," said Daly. "I will just top up with one glass of sherry, and betake myself to 'mine inn,' extremely glad to have seen Gilbert happy, and to thank you for your hospitality." Saying which he rose from the table, Wells rang the bell, and having cordially shaken hands with both of us, the unreformed wag was in a few minutes clear of the house.

CHAPTER IX.

"I HAD no idea," said Wells, when Daly was out of hearing, "that our entertaining mimic was your redoubtable friend, of whom you have so often spoken: if I had—and I wonder almost that you had not told me—I don't think I should have asked him here."

"My motive," said I, "for not saying anything about him was my desire not to betray him under his disguise; but most certainly I did not expect to find him your guest."

"The deuce you did not!" said Wells. "Then he must be rather a sharp hand. He came up to me in the library, told me he had breakfasted with *you*, and that you regretted your engagement to *me*—of which I then knew nothing—

because it would keep you from him ; and all this he did so plausibly, and so coolly, that he made me understand, without directly saying it, that you wished to dine here instead of at Ashmead, in order to keep the house quiet, and that, moreover, your plan was that I should ask him to meet you.

"Well," said I, "give him the full credit for his ingenuity, and believe that I was perfectly innocent of any such conspiracy, and never was more surprised in my life than when I found him here."

"Never mind," said Wells ; "I wish we had not such good, or rather bad reasons for driving him away. Gilbert, rely upon it, that boy will not get over it."

"I fear not," said I.

"We had better prepare poor Harriet for the possibility of his death," said Wells ; "and moreover, I am anxious to see her mother. I have had a very extraordinary communication from the Lieutenant touching his affair with Fanny, of which I do not exactly understand the meaning."

"Come," said I, "let us be going ; and we mechanically proceeded to prepare for our walk to Ashmead, both of us occupied with a variety of feelings of the most unpleasant character.

During the *trajet*, however, Wells imparted to me some particulars of his difficulties ; for he was now struggling between an anxiety to promote his daughter's happiness, and a determination to support what he called the dignity of her character.

That Lieutenant Merman was attached to Fanny, there could be no doubt,—at least as much attached as an abrupt, iron-nerved man, wholly devoid of delicacy, or that sort of feeling which I hold to be essential to true love, could be ; and, although particularly disagreeable to me, there could be as little doubt that Miss Fanny Wells was extremely well disposed towards him. The avowed want of fortune on the part of the young lady exonerated him in her eyes from any imputation of interested motives in his affection, and his implicit belief that his aunt would make him her heir, fully justified his persisting in attentions which he all along proposed to carry to an honourable conclusion. So far all was well ; nobody could find fault, and certainly, least of all,

Wells, to whose notions about marriage I have so often referred. "The truth was," said my father-in-law, "that when the Lieutenant found that his inheritance was saddled with a condition, he preferred the money with the incumbrance to subjecting himself to incumbrances without the money.

But the Lieutenant and his aunt had reckoned without their host. Merman, when he had explained the position in which he was placed, by the pertinacious affection of his aunt Miss Maloney, and had, in fact, broken off the affair with Fanny, proceeded to the old lady, the source of all his future prosperity, and was most cordially received; his prompt appearance in answer to her summons practically evincing his readiness to fall into her arrangement.

" 'Dear Philip,' said his aunt, 'you will find Millicent Maloney a very charming young woman. I am extremely sorry that you have seen so little of her, but your being quartered in England, and our living in Ireland, have kept you too long apart. My plan of settling you together is not one of to-day, but I had my reasons for not communicating it to you in direct terms before. The moment you told me your intentions of proposing for another young lady, I felt it necessary to open my heart to you.'

" 'I wish,' said the Lieutenant, 'it had so happened that I could have been aware of your views before—for really Miss Wells is a nice girl; and I have got so completely habituated to the ways of her family, that it is painful to myself not to speak of its being rather unfair to *her*, to break off such an engagement. That, however, isn't much, because I fairly told her father, it would be madness in me to marry her without adequate means for her support—the wife of a subaltern, with, perhaps, half a dozen children, destined to be stowed away in a bare-walled den in barracks, or cooped up in country quarters in a two-windowed drawing-room over a chandler's shop, ought not to be taken from the quiet comforts of such a house as Blissford Rectory. If I had the means——'

" 'Ay, ay,' said the aunt, 'but you have not the means, Philip. All I want you to do is, to see Millicent—her father was one of the handsomest men that ever stepped: he was, as you know one of your honourable profession,

and Millicent is naturally attached to those who, like yourself belong to it.

“ ‘And her mother?’ said Philip—

“ ‘Ay, that’s the question.”

“ ‘Her mother,’ said the aunt, ‘was a young lady of good family—it was a runaway match. I knew her well—intimately—poor girl, she died within a very short time of Millicent’s birth, who, consequently, never knew a mother’s care. Her death happened at a time when I had gone into the country for the benefit of my health; and I had the melancholy satisfaction of being with her when she breathed her last. Her husband had been ordered abroad about two months before the event, which she survived only five weeks. I promised her to be a mother to her child. I brought the baby home to my father’s house when I returned—brought her up carefully—and, when old enough, sent her to school; and, as you know, when my father died and I went to live in Ireland, she accompanied me, and, in fact, has never left me since.’

“ ‘Your kindness has been remarkable,’ said Philip, making a sort of sniff with his nose, which sounded more significant than genteel.

“ ‘Is it not natural, then,’ said his aunt, ‘that, meaning to leave everything I have to those most dear to me, I should wish you, who have a natural claim upon me, to unite yourself to her to whom I am so much attached? Thus the amount of what I leave would be jointly yours, and I should see you settled and happy before I quitted this transitory life.’

“ ‘Nobody would venture to impugn your kind intentions,’ said the Lieutenant; ‘all I presume to complain of is, my not having been earlier made acquainted with them—her father—’

“ ‘Oh,’ said Philip’s aunt, ‘her father never returned to England.—He died in the West Indies in half a year after his departure.’

“ ‘And is Miss Maloney now here?’ said Philip, who saw lying about the room, harpstrings, and colour-boxes, and work-boxes, and odd volumes of novels, a song or two, some netting, and knotting, and knitting-needles, and sundry

other similar indications of the presence of a young accomplished female.

“ ‘To be sure she is,’ said the aunt; ‘I only wanted to put you *au fait* before I introduced you to her—here is her picture, and an excellent likeness too.’

“ Philip looked at the miniature which she proffered, and beheld a countenance full of animated expression, with a pair of eloquent eyes, and a witching smile upon her lips, which, taken in conjunction with a figure that, as far as it went in the picture, was perfectly symmetrical, instantly superseded the less classical beauties of the deserted Fanny Wells in the mind of the Lieutenant.

“ ‘Gad,’ said the Lieutenant, ‘this is very lovely, though! But I tell you what, aunt—don’t suppose I mean to flatter you—but upon my life there is something in the expression of the mouth that reminds me very much of *you*.’

“ ‘ME!’ exclaimed the aunt: ‘what a notion! Compare *me*, at forty-one, with that blooming creature of nineteen! Philip, Philip, Philip, you are dreaming. No, no! I never was so handsome as that. No, she takes after her father more than after her mother.’

“ ‘If Miss Melecent——’

“ ‘Millicent, my dear Philip,’ said the aunt.

“ ‘I never know,’ said Philip, ‘how to pronounce that name.’

“ ‘Why,’ said the aunt, who was a wag in *her* line, ‘in the present case you may pronounce it either way—

“ You may call her Millicent on account of her money,
Or Mellecent, because she’s as sweet as honey.”

There’s for you!’

“ ‘I am delighted to see you in such spirits, aunt,’ said the Lieutenant; ‘now tell me when am I to be presented?’

“ ‘As soon as you have dressed for dinner,’ said the aunt.

First impressions go a great way, and I want her to like you at once.’

“ As for myself, if I had been there I should speedily have abandoned all hopes of success by a *coup de main*. Merman was decidedly no beauty, and if he were destined to win a heart, it must be by the exercise of that most perilous of all

man's members, the tongue: however, the Lieutenant did not think so, and, accordingly, acting upon the suggestion of his worthy relation, who had proved herself so much attached to him, and so careful of his interests, bestowed a double share of pains upon the completion of his toilette.

"Miss Pennefather—or, as she was beginning to call herself, *Mrs.* Pennefather, dined early—five o'clock—and in the summer a drive or a stroll in the cool of the evening was the order of the day. As it was, and while stern winter bound fair Nature in his icy chains, Millicent would endeavour to make the fire-side agreeable—she would sing to him—for she sung divinely. She would show him her drawings, for she drew beautifully, and then at some more genial season when—

‘The sun had chased the mountain snow,
And kindly loosed the frozen soil,

she would stroll with him by the banks of the beautiful river which rolled its silver tide under the terrace at the end of the flower garden, and point out to him the beauties of the verdant valley which lay at their feet. All this, it must be confessed, was well calculated to eradicate from his memory the less showy qualifications of my poor sister-in-law, and teach him to forget the humbler laurel walks of hospitable Blissford.

"Within a few minutes of five, the Lieutenant paraded himself in the drawing-room of *Mrs.* Pennefather's perfect Paradise, at the end of which was a large looking-glass, in which the Lieutenant kept continually gazing at himself, improving all his good points; twisting his hair into curl, settling his neckcloth, arranging his waistcoat, and all the rest of it, until his dear relation made her appearance, looking, it must be confessed, exceedingly handsome, and evidently not dressed as a foil for her jewel of a niece.

"‘I thought,’ said she, ‘we should be better without strangers to-day; so we shall be quite alone.’

"‘So much the more agreeable,’ said the Lieutenant.

"‘Dinner is on the table,’ said the butler.

"‘Good news,’ said the Lieutenant.

"‘Does Miss Maloney know we are waiting?’ said Miss Pennefather

" 'I'll enquire, Ma'am, said the man, and retired.

" 'Come, Philip,' said the aunt, 'we are at home, and I hope you feel we are ; so come. Millicent will join us in the dining-room.'

" And with a coquetish air of gallantry, she extended her arm to her nephew, in order that he might offer his, *en cavalier* : and away they went across the hall ; and the dinner smelt savourily.

" Just as the happy pair were about to seat themselves, the butler returned with news that Miss Maloney was not in her room.

" 'Oh, then,' said Miss Pennefather, 'she has probably gone into the library. Tell Gibson to go and find her.'

" 'Gibson isn't in, Ma'am,' said the butler.

" 'Why, who dressed her, I wonder?' said the aunt. 'She could not have dressed without her maid.'

" 'Miss Gibson hasn't been in since the morning,' said a tall white-faced footman.

" 'What's the meaning of this?' said Miss Pennefather.

" Nobody knew ; everybody looked. Some looked wise, some looked foolish.

" 'I'll go to her room myself,' said Miss Pennefather. 'Excuse me, Philip, for a few minutes. This is mighty strange ; I can't comprehend it.'

" The Lieutenant was in a very awkward position, standing in the middle of the dining-room, exposed to the gaze of the servants, who had heard a week before, from Miss Gibson, the cause of his intended visit.

" 'Thomas, put the covers on again,' said the butler ; and the dinner vanished from the longing eyes of the hungry soldier.

" A loud scream just at this instant rang through the house. The maid-servants scrambled up the stairs ; and when they reached Miss Millicent Maloney's bed-room, they found their amiable mistress, Miss Laura Pennefather, in a violent fit at the foot of the bed."

Wells had just reached this point of his narrative when we arrived at the gate of Ashmead : after we had entered the house he thus continued his account of the proceedings at Aunt Pennefather's.

"No sooner had the amiable mistress of the house recovered from her fainting, which held for some time, and was eventually overcome by the application of harts-horn and eau de Cologne, the burning of feathers, the sprinkling of water, and all the established remedies recommended by the Humane Society for the restoration of hysterical ladies, than she screamed out the name of Millicent Maloney, in a tone emulating that of a peacock in anticipation of rain; but, although she had regained the use of her voice, her intellectual faculties continued in a lamentable state of obfuscation—her eyes rolled in every direction—her fists remained clenched—and the first coherent phrase which the anxious attendants could understand was this, 'Who the devil is it with?' Then it was, the maid-servants looked at each other—then it was they began to feel a confidence that their suspicions were well founded, and that something very extraordinary had happened to Miss Millicent Maloney.

"'Where is she?' said the recovering Pennefather—'where is she?—I ask you all, where is she?'

"'She?' said one.

"'Where?' said another.

"'Where is who?' cried a third.

"'Millicent—my child Millicent!' said Miss Pennefather.

"'Child!' said Mary.

"'Child!' exclaimed Jenny.

"'Child!' reiterated Susan.

"'Yes,' faltered out Miss Pennefather—'my child—my niece—my young friend!'

"'The last time I saw her, Ma'am,' said Susan, 'was a-going down the garden, just by the yew-trees, towards the summer-house.'

"'When was that?' said Miss Pennefather.

"'About ten o'clock this morning,' said Susan.

"'Psha! ridiculous!' said her mistress. 'Didn't she lunch with me at half-past one?'

"'I only said——'

"'Stuff! nonsense!' exclaimed the lady. 'Lift me

up—raise my head. Where's Philip? Where's the note? Oh, here, what on earth shall I do—what shall I do?

"Hereabouts the unfortunate lady relapsed into a state of insensibility, and the note which she had previously clenched in her hand, and about which she evinced such earnest solicitude, fell from her grasp.

"‘Susan,’ said Mary, as it tumbled on the floor

"‘Mary,’ said Susan, nodding her head.

"‘Susan,’ said Jenny—‘I say——’

"Whereupon they began signalling to each other, to take advantage of their mistress's ‘absence’ to inform themselves of the contents of the billet. The sympathies of mischief and curiosity combined were at work, and without the waste of another word, the domestic Graces of the unconscious Venus, were busily occupied: one in greedily swallowing with her eyes the intelligence so anxiously coveted, and the other two grouped so as to prevent Miss Pennefather seeing what was going on if she should happen suddenly to open her swain-killing eyes.

"Susan took upon herself the active and responsible part of the performance, and picking up the note, which they knew to be of Miss Maloney's writing, read, *sotto voce*. what follows:—

"‘MY DEAREST FRIEND,

"‘Your constant and long-continued kindness to me makes it doubly painful to me to take the decided step which, nevertheless, I have resolved upon. I would not for the world oppose your wishes or incur your displeasure; but the crisis is at hand, and therefore I am forced to act promptly. My heart is so devotedly attached and so immutably engaged to another, that it would be worse than hypocrisy even to permit your nephew to be introduced to me in the character of an avowed lover. In cases such as these, discussions only excite and promote angry feelings. I have made my own decision, and will abide by it, let what may be the consequences. Before this reaches you, I shall have placed my fate beyond the chance of alteration—two days hence you shall have further particulars. In the meantime assure yourself that I am safe and happy, and always affectionately yours,

"‘MILLCENT MALONEY.’

“‘That’s it, is it?’ said Mary, rubbing her mistress’s temples with eau de Cologne.

“‘That’s it,’ rejoined Jenny, as she chafed her mistress’s hands; ‘and a pretty it, it is too.’

“‘Can you guess who?’ whispered Jenny.

“‘Hush! Hem!—do you feel yourself a little better, Ma’am?’ said Jenny, finding Miss Pennefather ‘coming to,’ as she called it.

“‘Jane, said Miss Pennefather, gasping for breath; ‘I never can be better. Tell me, where’s the note?’

“‘Where’s the note, Susan?’ said Jane.

“‘What note?’ said Susan.

“‘Do you mean that bit of paper, doubled up down there?’ said Mary.

“‘Yes, child, yes!’ said Miss Pennefather; ‘that’s it; give it me. Do you know anything at all about it?’

“‘It, Ma’am?’ said Mary.

“‘What, Ma’am?’ said Susan.

“‘What do you mean, Ma’am?’ said Jenny.

“‘Why, about Miss Millicent’s going off,’ said Miss Pennefather.

“‘Off!’ exclaimed Susan.

“‘Going!’ cried Mary.

“‘Going off!’ screamed Jenny.

“‘Off!’ repeated the lady. ‘This note tells me that she has left me—fled—run away, in short. But can nobody guess who the man is?’

“‘Man!’ said the three maids at once.

“‘Yes—man!’ said Miss Pennefather emphatically. ‘She is gone away with a man.’

“‘Dear me!’ said Susan.

“‘Oh dear!’ cried Jane.

“‘Oh, bless me!’ said Mary.

“‘Have you seen nobody about the house lately?’ said Miss Pennefather.

“‘No,’ was the general reply, with an exception made by Susan, of John Bartram, the old man known as the ‘helper,’ and who did all the work of all the regular servants.

“‘Nonsense,’ said the lady. ‘Oh, no, no; there is some fly-away Irishman in the case, I have no doubt. Just like

her mother—no care—no thought. What am I to do with my poor nephew? What am I to say? How am I to excuse myself? I can't dine—I can't sit up. Susan, go and tell Simmons to give my love to Mr. Philip, and say I am too unwell to go down to dinner; beg him to dine, and—but then what will *he* think? You had better let Simmons tell him—no, go yourself—go yourself, and explain why I cannot dine with him. Say, I shall, I hope, be better in the evening, and will talk over matters with him, and—if he should ask about Millicent, why—you know what I have told you, and so—make him understand—break it to him—it is better than trusting Simmons—besides, I cannot tell him myself. O, Millicent, Millicent! foolish, headstrong girl!

“Susan, of course, obeyed her mistress's commands, although the mission to which she was appointed was, in fact, one of considerable delicacy and no little difficulty. Susan, who was an extremely pretty black-eyed girl, took the precaution, before she proceeded to the interview with the Lieutenant, to run into Miss Pennefather's dressing-room in order to give her jetty ringlets a fresh twirl round her finger, and settle the little fanciful cap which she wore on her head. It is impossible to trace the exact current of female minds; but, however absurd it may appear, Susan, at the moment, felt the possibility of such a thing happening as the Lieutenant, being in the extremity of his despair for the loss of the mistress, drawn suddenly into a violent admiration of the maid.

Susan's heart fluttered terribly as she approached the dining-parlour in which Merman had been “left alone in his glory;” Simmons having taken the precaution of having the ‘soup and fish taken back to the kitchen to wait for further orders. Susan tapped at the door—a precautionary habit sedulously inculcated in all decent families—the “coming in” of Lieutenant Merman brought her face to face with that distinguished officer.

“When the door was opened, Merman was discovered standing with his back to the fire, munching the piece of bread which had been deposited on the side of his plate, and which, in the then ravenous state of his appetite, he could no longer resist.

“ ‘I beg your pardon, sir,’ said Susan, dropping a sort of theatrical half-curtsey, ‘but my mistress begs you will not wait dinner for her. She will come down in the evening, when she hopes to be better.’

“ ‘And Miss Maloney?’ said Merman, inquiringly.

“ ‘Why sir,’ said Susan, colouring deeply, ‘Miss Maloney, sir,—is—that’s it, sir——’

“ ‘It!—what?’ said the Lieutenant.

“ ‘Why, sir,’ said Susan, ‘that’s the reason my mistress is not well enough to come down.’

“ ‘What?’ again said the soldier.

“ ‘Miss Millicent, sir, is gone out.’

“ ‘Gone out!’ said Merman.

“ ‘Yes, sir.

“ ‘What, in the snow?’

“ ‘I don’t know, I’m sure, sir,’ said Susan; ‘but—she is gone.’

“ ‘Alone?’ said Merman.

“ ‘I can’t say, sir,’ said Susan; ‘but my mistress seems to think not.’

“ ‘Are we to wait till she returns?’ asked Merman.

“ ‘Oh dear no!’ said the maiden. ‘I believe, if you were, you’d have to wait a long time.’

“ ‘What do you mean?’ said Merman. ‘Come here: tell me—is Miss Maloney gone on a visit, or——’

“ ‘No, sir,’ said Susan: ‘don’t be angry, sir; we all know what you are come here for, and so did Miss Millicent; and so, sir,—don’t tell my mistress that I told you all,—Miss Millicent has run away with somebody else;—don’t be in a passion, don’t.’

“ ‘Passion!’ exclaimed the Lieutenant. ‘I don’t see why I should be in a passion. I never saw her, and therefore couldn’t care much for her. Now, I am free to choose whom I like.’

“ ‘That’s very true, sir,’ said Susan, biting her lips to make them redder than usual. The look which the pretty girl put on immediately reminded the Lieutenant that he was treating her more confidentially than, considering their relative positions, was either necessary or becoming, by ex-

pressing in so unreserved a manner the satisfaction which he felt at the defection of his intended wife.

“ ‘My mistress begs you will eat your dinner, sir,’ said Susan.

“ ‘I’ll endeavour,’ said Merman; ‘but give my love to her, and ask her if I may send her something; and will you tell the butler that I’m ready.’

Susan bobbed an assenting curtsey, and left the room perfectly satisfied that her mistress’s nephew was not likely to die for love, at least upon the present occasion.”

It turned out in the sequel that Miss Millicent Maloney had left her heart in the Emerald Isle, and that the gentleman who had it in his keeping had been summoned to England as soon as Miss Laura Pennefather had expressed her determination with regard to Merman. There was nothing objectionable about the lady’s favour, except that worldly blemish—a want of fortune. And all Merman’s present anxieties were directed to the immediate conclusion of his affair with Fanny Wells, while his aunt’s irritation of feeling towards Millicent continued, fearing, naturally enough, that time and her natural affections would soften her anger and relax the resolution which she had in her rage announced to him, of cutting her off entirely. Here, however, the light infantry officer was defeated: Laura could forget and forgive, or rather it may be said she forgave because she could not forget; and, at the termination of the Lieutenant’s visit, his aunt gave him to understand that if she remained in her present mind, as to Millicent’s conduct, he would, at her death, receive a moiety of the sum intended for him if his marriage with Millicent had taken place.

This made a vast difference in his position. The diminution of the amount of his expected fortune by one-half—the contingency, too, by which he was to run his military life against that of a quiet, moderate lady of regular habits and a good constitution, were serious drawbacks; he certainly loved Fanny better than anybody else, except himself, and considering the fortune he was to look to, in conjunction with her charms, and hating the notion that she would very soon find out if he did not marry *her*, that he had been

rejected by Miss Maloney, he sat down and wrote to Wells, giving his own version of his expedition, and begging to be allowed to return to his old quarters, and offering himself, such as he was, for the acceptance of his daughter.

It was in this position of affairs that Wells sought my advice and an opinion whether considering that Merman had actually retired, and gone avowedly to marry another woman, Fanny could consistently with the dignity of her character, receive him again, and consent to become his wife, because the other lady would not have him. The point, I admit, was one of considerable delicacy, but as far as I could see, or indeed suggest, it seemed to me most particularly to rest upon Wells's objection to the change of fortune, and Fanny's feelings towards the Lieutenant: at all events, my proposition was, that if Wells was himself not hostile to the marriage for financial reasons, Fanny should be left entirely to herself, to decide according to her wishes and inclinations. Mrs. Wells was outrageously indignant at the proposition, which she considered in the light of a downright insult, and did not hesitate to appropriate to the absent officer the epithets of "fortune-hunter," "coxcomb," and "impudent fellow." Fanny, however, did not join in the cry against him, but maintained that all he did was perfectly disinterested, and that he had consented to give her up only to save her from the necessity of making sacrifices, and exposing herself to difficulties and inconveniences which she was even yet ready to encounter for the sake of her dear Philip. With great dutifulness, however, she declared her willingness to be guided entirely by her father, a proof of her obedience which I confess lost some of its merit in my eyes, from her knowing which way it was most probable the Rector would decide, when there was a prospect of marrying off a daughter.

CHAPTER X.

THINGS were thus proceeding, when, having forewarned poor Harriet of the dangerous state of Tom Falwasser's health, I anxiously awaited the arrival of intelligence from Sniggs. With the morning came worse accounts of the boy, and by the post came the following letter from his eldest sister :—

“ Montpelier, Bath.

“ DEAR UNCLE.—Pappy is most anxious to hear about Tom, and wondered why you did not write; but when I told him you did not know where to direct to him, he was quite satisfied: pray let him hear about my brother. Pappy has got the pretty cottage Mrs. Brandyball talked of next to our school, and seems very happy. Mrs. Brandyball is very attentive and kind to him, and very good to us; indeed, neither Jane nor I do anything but what we please. We are mostly in at the cottage, for Pappy likes us to be as much with him as we can. Pappy says that when Tom gets well he is to come to us here, and then perhaps after the Easter holidays we shall all go to some other place, for I should not be very much surprised if our governess was to give up her school. Pappy says it must be so fatiguing to her, and thinks that she would have quite enough to do to superintend the education of me and Jane.

“ I hope dear aunty and the little boy are quite well, and dear Fanny and Bessy. I should be delighted to hear from the latter. Give my love, and Jane sends hers. Pappy desires to be kindly remembered, and hopes you will let him hear soon.

“ Yours, dear Uncle, affectionately,

“ KATE FALWASSER.”

I was not in a humour to think much about myself when I received this despatch, for my mind was fully occupied with the fate of poor Tom; but certainly, as the communication—by proxy—of an affectionate brother, the self-proposed godfather of my child, his infant nephew, never was anything less satisfactory. To have expected Cuthbert to exert

himself to an extent of favouring me with an autograph letter, might have been too much ; but to find no word, no syllable from him, referring in the slightest degree either to my wife or child, or to his intentions respecting his sponsorship proposition, nor indeed any hint even tending to make me fancy that I occupied the smallest share of his attention, was beyond my anticipations. That it was painful, I admit ; and if I had been in a state to dwell upon it, it would have awakened a thousand feelings, which perhaps it was as well should not be called into play. It was evident that Mrs. Brandyball's influence was rapidly increasing, and the artless manner in which Kate mentioned the probability of that *amiable* lady's giving up the fatigue of general tuition, to devote her time and talents to the exclusive improvement of my two half-nieces, convinced me that all my worst apprehensions were eventually to be realised.

To Harriet I merely communicated the fact that I had heard from Cuthbert—for I could not venture to apprise her of the nature of his letter. She, dear soul, was so full of kindness, so feelingly alive to my interests, and had devoted herself so entirely for *my* sake to him, that I was sure she would feel deeply and bitterly the tone and spirit of Kate's letter. In fact, I do not think, since the day of my beloved mother's death (a day always present to my memory), I ever felt so perfectly miserable as on this.

With one o'clock—the hour of luncheon—came Sniggs, and his report was such as to convince me that no hope remained of saving the boy ; it then struck me that I would wait until the fatal event occurred, and immediately afterwards start for Bath to break the news to Cuthbert ; then I resolved upon writing, anticipating in my letter the worst which might happen. Sniggs worried me with technicalities, and the smell of the camphor with which he was highly perfumed reminded me of the danger likely to be incurred by his visit ; for although the whole establishment had been rendered proof against the infection, still the baby was yet unharmed, and when I saw him deliberately sit down to help himself to cold fowl and tongue, and ask the servant for some hot potato and cold butter, my patience was severely tested.

Yet why should I have been vexed and irritated? What was poor Tom Faiwasser to him? He was his patient, and promised to be a valuable one, supposing his recovery to excite his father-in-law's gratitude—but else Tom, uninteresting as it must be confessed he was while in health, interested not my worthy friend the apothecary more than any other lout who might be put under his care for cure. Sniggs evidently enjoyed his repast, and from him I learned that Daly had actually left Blissford; the state of mind in which he found the Rector and myself, and the unceremonious manner in which we felt absolutely compelled to turn him out, had determined him no doubt to quit a place, the hospitality of which could not have appeared to him in any very favourable light. It was, however, a seasonable relief to me to be assured of his absence. All that I had to reproach myself with was, the not having taken a favourable opportunity to inquire if any pecuniary aid would be essentially serviceable to him. I consoled myself, however, upon this point with the belief that if he felt himself at any time "hard run," he would make no scruple in applying to me for assistance.

"Gad!" said Sniggs, "this is an awkward job—Master Tom's dying at my house—infectious disease—keep away patients—never had such a thing happen to me before—odd circumstance—deuced unlucky."

"It is indeed," said I, thinking at the same time of the two bottles of cherry brandy.

"You know Dr. Fuz by sight," said Sniggs, still eating—"the old man at Bassford—retired from practice now—did live here five-and-twenty years ago—comes to church sometimes—sits in the chancel opposite the Rector—he had a patient in his house—did I ever tell you that, sir?"

"I think not," said I, in a tone which ought to have induced a belief that I did not particularly wish to hear then.

"Deuced odd," said my friend. "Fuz was riding home one night from visiting, and was stopped by a highwayman—things now getting out of fashion. 'Money or your life!' said the fellow. Fuz pulled up—a man who had saved so many other lives, instinctively desired to preserve his own.

Don't abuse me, sir, you shall have all I have got." Dark as it was, the remotest recesses of the Doctor's pockets were hunted, in order to satisfy the rapacity of the robber; and twenty guineas, a ten-pound note, a few shillings, and a gold watch, were delivered to the marauder, who, making the Doctor a graceful bow, wished him a good evening and went his way. Fuz—fond of money as he was, and deeply regretting his watch, the heirloom of the Fuzzes—put spurs to his horse, which, as George Colman says,—

‘———was indeed a very sorry hack;—
But that's of course,
For what's expected from a horse
With an apothecary on his back?’

He! he! he! So away goes Fuz as hard as he can with such cavalry—reaches home—rushes into the arms of Mrs. F., and bids her thank Providence that he is returned safe and sound, although deprived of his gold, silver, notes, watch, and ornamental appendages.

“What are ornaments compared with your life?” exclaimed the affectionate female Fuz. ‘I do thank Providence—think no more of the money, love—it is, as they say, only mounting twenty or thirty pair of stairs next week, and it will all return.’ And after this sweet parley they sat themselves down to supper.

“Scarcely had they entered fully into the enjoyment of the sociable meal, before a loud ringing at their gate aroused them from their comforts.

“‘I know what it is,’ said Fuz; ‘Mrs. Rattletrap is——’

“What I can't say,” said Sniggs, “for the rest of the Doctor's supposition was cut short by the entrance of one of the servants, who announced that a gentleman had been fired at by a highwayman not a quarter of an hour before, and severely wounded. His horse, from which he had fallen, had escaped, and two labourers, who had found him lying on the ground groaning heavily, had brought him direct to the Doctor's door.

“Up jumped the Doctor, out he ran, and there sure

enough found a gentleman bleeding and looking excessively pale; he had him carried into one of the parlours, and laid upon a sofa; his coat was taken off, and upon examination it appeared that he had received a gun-shot wound in his left-arm: the ball, however, had passed clean through, marvellously escaping the heart of the sufferer, who, it was evident to the learned Fuz, was rendered senseless by the fall from his horse, rather than the effects of the hit. The Doctor, who was one of the most humane of men, first bled his patient, and then, when the gentleman was sufficiently recovered to comprehend the extent of his care and hospitality, told him that he could not think of letting him stir out that night, and had accordingly ordered a bed to be got ready for him. The wounded stranger was quite overpowered by the courtesy of his doctor.

“‘Sir,’ said Fuz, ‘it is not mere common-place civility that I offer. It is a duty I owe to Providence, sir;—the villain who wounded *you* robbed *me*, sir, not half an hour before, within twenty yards of the same place; if I had happened to deny him, or to have had nothing about me, *gad*, sir, I might have been shot instead of you.’

“‘Very probably, sir,’ said the gentleman. ‘I believe it is very bad policy to make any resistance—somebody is sure to suffer.’

“‘Oh,’ said Fuz, ‘that’s very true; but the highwayman sometimes gets the worst of it.’

“‘Yes,’ said the patient, ‘but I shall never try my hand again that way; however, your kindness, sir, has been most seasonably bestowed, and I hope to be able to show you how very sensibly I feel it.’

“‘Don’t mention it, sir,’ said Fuz; ‘don’t fatigue yourself with talking—lean on me—I will show you the way to your room; you will find everything comfortable, I hope. I shall bring you some gruel with a leetle very old Lisbon in it—Mrs. Fuz’s favourite tipple—and a leetle dry toast, and then you will get a comfortable night as I hope, and in the morning I shall have the happiness of presenting you to Mrs. F., and in two or three days all will be well again.’

"It should be observed," continued Sniggs, "not that I mean to question my old predecessor's philanthropy, but it is possible such a thing might have had its effect—that, when he removed the stranger's coat and waistcoat, he—accidentally of course—perceived a good store of sterling coin in one of the pockets of the latter garment, which gave the provident Doctor a good, or rather a golden opinion of his chance customer, and seemed fully to justify the resistance which he had made to the highwayman's attack.

" 'I can never thank you sufficiently,' said the patient, as he toiled his way to the room appropriated to his use. Arrived at the apartment, the Doctor's own man was in attendance to assist and undress the opulent stranger.

" 'And now,' said Fuz, 'now, my dear sir, when you are comfortably in bed, and would like the gruel I spoke of, do as Lady Macbeth did—

' Strike upon the bell,'

and I will bring 'the drink' myself. There is something in your misfortune and my escape which specially binds me to you—so do as I prescribe.'

" 'Indeed, sir,' said the gentleman, 'your kindness is far beyond anything I could have expected from a stranger.'

" 'Not a word about it, sir,' said Fuz; 'you see I act upon the best principle. You were a stranger, and I have taken you in.'

"Well," said Sniggs, "the bell was struck—the gruel was taken—the patient shook the Doctor's hand, and they parted; the Doctor entreating the patient if he should feel the wound uneasy or any feverish symptoms should annoy him during the night, to ring his bell and summon him to his apartment.

"What Fuz said to Mrs. F. in that season of perfect ingenuousness which is comprised in the half-hour after retiring to rest, I know not," continued Sniggs; "but the chances are, that he congratulated himself upon having what he called formed a connexion; he spoke with admiration of the manner of his guest, and certainly did not omit to

substantiate all his favourable opinions by a reference to the contents of his sinister waistcoat-pocket—

Gold is the strength, the sinews of the world;
The health, the soul, the beauty most divine;
A mask of gold hides all deformities,—
Gold is heaven's physic, life's restorative.'

So says Dekkar, and so thought Fuz.

"Well, sir," said Sniggs, "the patient slept soundly—no bell rang. Fuz was equally at his ease, nor did he wake till nine. Up he gets—dresses with the nicest precision—and down to his patient in the best bed-room—taps at the door—no answer—taps again—still mute—'Gad! he's dead!' muttered Fuz: tetanus, by Jove' In he bolts—rushes to the bed—there was the nest, but the bird was flown. What did it mean? what could it mean?—where was he? what was he? In the midst of his confusion, Fuz threw his eyes upon a neat small table covered with red cloth, whereon were deposited an inkstand, portfeuille, and all the other implements for writing, upon which lay a note, without a superscription, which, being directed to nobody, might be meant for anybody. This Fuz opened, and thus he read:

"DEAR SIR,

"I shall never forget your kindness. I felt it necessary to relieve you of my presence as soon as possible. You are much too good a fellow to suffer. Under the pillow of my bed you will find twenty guineas and a ten pound note; accept them without scruple, for they are your own. and in order further to show my sense of gratitude, I beg to add, that if you will take the trouble to walk to the second field on the right hand beyond the turnpike, you will find your watch, chain, and seals stuck into a haystack which stands in the corner of it. I have to apologize for not having wound it up. I do not regret my wound, for if the two worthies who shot me last night had been as goodnatured as you, I should never have had the pleasure of your acquaintance, and you would never have got your own property back as a fee.

"Yours'

* * * *

“‘Gad so!’ cried the Doctor, ‘this is strange!’ The Doctor, however, did not lose much time before he lifted the pillow and found his money; and the first thing he did after he had breakfasted, was to walk to the haystack and recover his watch. Wasn’t that a good joke?”

“Yes,” said I, having mechanically listened to the narrative.

“But,” continued he, having completely anatomized the chicken, “I must be off again. You shall hear in an hour—and another bulletin before post-time.”

“If it ends fatally,” said I, “I shall go to my brother—that I am resolved upon.”

In this determination Sniggs strengthened me; and as soon as he had left the house, I went to Harriet, in order to prepare her for my departure. Mrs. Wells had, for the first day since my wife’s confinement, left her and gone to the Rectory accompanied by Fanny, so that I had an opportunity of talking over our family matters without interruption; and since Harriet had now recovered sufficient strength to discuss the several points which appeared to press, it was a great comfort to me to find her views of the future, characterized by the same sweet, mild, and generous spirit, which she had uniformly displayed in what I now began to fear might have been our brightest days. My anticipations with regard to my brother’s conduct after the death of Tom, seemed perfectly to agree with those of my wife; we felt that he was estranged from us, and that nothing was wanting but such an event as this to sever entirely the bonds between us.

“What does it signify, Gilbert?” said Harriet: “we have a larger house than we want: a cottage will answer our purpose, and a plain, nice little garden will do just as well, without all these grounds, and these hothouses and pineries, and luxuries. Oh no, dear; so long as we have health we shall have happiness; and, after all, Gilbert, we shall be more independent.”

“Come,” said I, “we will not make up our minds yet to the reality of our reverses: it is quite right, when one does depend upon the will of others, to be prepared for the worst; and you delight me by the way in which you bend to the

coming wave. Still, I will not suffer myself to think so ill either of Cuthbert's head or heart, as even yet entirely to believe that we shall need to practise our philosophy." Thus I said ; but did not *feel* as secure as I wished my poor love to imagine I did.

While these things were passing at Ashmead, other affairs were in progress at the Rectory. Merman, whose anxiety and rapidity of movement induced me to think that he was sincerely attached to Fanny, had followed his letter, and was actually ensconced in his old lodgings in Blissford, within a few hours after Wells received it. Of this fact he apprised the worthy Rector, and it was in consequence of these prompt measures that Mrs. Wells and her daughter had gone home to deliberate and decide. It is impossible for me to say what were the arguments adduced pro and con, or who chiefly advocated the cause of the Lieutenant ; but, as I have already stated, the moment I heard that offended pride and a lady's love were to be put in opposite scales, and that Miss Fanny was to hold the beam, I entertained very little doubt which would preponderate.

I ought, perhaps, to mention that Miss Millicent Maloney had not been heard of by Mrs. Pennefather at the time of the Lieutenant's departure—a circumstance which induced her affectionate friend to believe that the companion of her flight was not altogether so unexceptionable as she had hoped. It turned out, moreover, that the young lady's maid, Gibson, did not accompany her ; but, on the contrary, was perfectly ignorant of her flight. Miss Maloney having sent her on an errand to the neighbouring town, desiring her to wait there for her, she did wait until so long after the usual dinner hour at home, that she fancied she must have made some mistake, and then returned ; and, as she said herself, "the very first syllable as ever she heard of Miss Milly's going was from Susan, when she came into the house." Nobody in the neighbourhood had seen Miss Maloney out in the afternoon, either alone or with anybody else ; no horses had been ordered from, nor come to, any of the inns in the town, nor to the alehouse in the village, nor had any carriage passed through since the morning. Where, how, when, and with whom the young lady had migrated, still therefore remained a mystery.

Not so the termination of the proceedings at the Rectory ; for, hearing the approach of visitors across the lawn somewhere about four o'clock, I looked out and beheld four familiar faces, "wreathed in smiles," looking up at the windows of Harriet's room. They belonged to the Rector and his lady, who walked first, and to Fanny Wells and Lieutenant Merman, who followed arm-in-arm, just as sociable as if nothing had ever happened to ripple the course of their true love. I welcomed the young couple—for now they were avowedly a pair—and shook my brother-in-law by the hand, with a determination to make the best of it, still however silently wishing that the service of his country might require his presence in some field of glory far from the quiet plains of Ashmead.

It was now drawing near post-time, and I was waiting impatiently either for Sniggs, or a despatch from him, in order to regulate my proceedings. It was just five, and I grew dreadfully uneasy, and began to pace up and down my library, when the door opened, and the servant gave me a note from Sniggs, sealed with black wax. My fingers trembled as I opened it. Opened, however, it was, and I read :

"DEAR SIR,

"The boy is less feverish, and I think things look better. You shall see me this evening.

"Yours,

"S. SNIGGS."

This unexpected report, of course, decided my stay ; and accordingly, I wrote to Cuthbert a detailed account of Tom's progress, and would have enclosed Sniggs's last hope-giving note, but I was sure that the word "boy" would have excited all my brother's ire, and given an idea of neglect and carelessness in our proceedings, so I copied it, leaving the fact, and substituting the word patient for the less respectful monosyllable which I found in the original. I confess I was quite delighted with the bulletin, worded as it might have been ; for, when the crisis seemed to be so evidently at hand, every cross word I had uttered with regard to young Falwasser seemed to rise up in judgment against me, although when he was well I scarcely ever saw a human being I hated so much. We are strange creatures, and I, perhaps, one of

the oddest ; however, I ate my dinner with a better appetite than I expected ; and after it was over, drank conjointly the healths of Fanny Wells and Lieutenant Philip Merman. This seemed strangest of all.

CHAPTER XI.

I CONFESS that I went to bed, after having received Sniggs's account of Tom, and after having transmitted it in my own language to Cuthbert, with an infinitely stronger hope of getting some tolerable rest than I had entertained for many previous nights. I had done what I felt to be my duty to a brother, who, eccentric as he might be, had always shown me the greatest kindness, and of whose mutability of disposition towards me I might, even now, have formed the most groundless and unjustifiable anticipations ; and, in so doing, had conquered a pride and prejudice which I ought probably never to have entertained in such a case.

The moment my mind was a little relieved under these circumstances, my thoughts naturally directed themselves to an object which most especially claimed an undivided interest, but which the agitating events of the last few days had separated—I mean, the state, condition, and prospects of my son and heir. What his inheritance might be, it seemed somewhat difficult to calculate ; but I thought, young as he was, that it was time to consult with Harriet as to the steps to be taken with regard to his baptism, and whether, if Tom should happily recover, I might venture to remind Cuthbert of his promise of standing godfather.

Nothing in the world, I am convinced, is more seriously or more constantly worrying than the possession of a very near relative with a very whimsical disposition. The moment I made my suggestion to Harriet, which I did dandling the dear little baby in my arms, only think—she instantly started the difficulty which existed in taking the first step : if we did not remind Cuthbert of the promise he had made, he

might take the trouble to be offended with us ; and if we *did* jog his memory, the chances were a hundred to one that he would be in as great a passion as he could muster because we bored him on the subject. Then there was to be another godfather and a godmother ; now we thought over one or two eligible men for Cuthbert's brother-sponsor, in case *he* stood ; but then we dared not whisper our wishes to any one of them until we had taken counsel from the nabob : and, as for a godmother, we did not know where to turn for one. The Nubleys were away, and had let their house to a sporting gentleman, with three or four questionable nieces, or cousins or sisters, or something of that sort ; so that neither Mr. Nubley on the one hand, nor Mrs. Nubley on the other, were available. Mrs. Wells might perhaps officiate ; but then—in short, all seemed to depend upon Cuthbert's fiat, and Cuthbert and his fiat depended on Tom's recovery.

As far as this very important event went, it was my good fortune to receive a favourable account soon after ten o'clock : things looked better, and Sniggs had hopes, which, however, were tempered conditionally, "if" so and so happened in the course of the day, and "if" so and so did not happen in the night, "we might anticipate a favourable result ;" which, if I had not felt sanguinely, and had been by any means jocosely inclined, I should have construed into a sort of sage declaration on the part of Sniggs, that, under all circumstances, it was his opinion that if poor Tom did not die, he would recover. Nevertheless there was hope—and a brighter hope than had beamed a day before ; and as Sniggs was good enough to inform me in a postscript that he would be at Ashmead, as usual, at one—an hour at which he was as certain to appear as Monk Lewis's popular ghost was to exhibit itself in its immediate opposite in the twenty-four hours, I felt convinced that he was in his own mind satisfied of the chances, at least, in the young uncouth patient's favour.

Having talked placidly with Harriet, played my child into a squalling fit, and received a sort of reproachful look from the nurse for having jumped it about at much too violent a rate for its age and size—for I had not at that period any just notion of the relative strength of materials, I proceeded

to strengthen my outward man with breakfast ; at which time the post arrives, and which, by an admirable contrivance of the General Post-office, under the actual, though not nominal guidance of one of the worthiest of men and most efficient public officers that ever lived, does me the favour to bring to my hand my London and my cross-country letters all at once, "simultaneously," as poor Nublely would have muttered while picking his dear old chin, so that my news flowed in from all quarters, if I had any to receive from more than one.

My bag arrived—was deposited, unlocked—one letter from London about furniture—one from Winchester about books—one from Bath, about what, I wonder?—a strange hand, evidently a woman's, a long, delicate, nearly unintelligible scrawl—a seal I know not—who can this be?—Bath—not Cuthbert? Yes, thought I, it is from my dear indolent Indian, who, in the plenitude of his laziness, has got some one of his fair friends at Montpelier to scrawl it for him ; and then I thought I recognised the extremely pretty unintelligibility of Kate's calligraphy—that, of course, I opened first, for furniture and books, although on their road, could not very rapidly follow their *avant couriers* :—crack went the seal—flap went the paper, and I saw—

"Montpelier, Bath.

"DEAR MR. GURNEY,

"Your good, kind, but terribly lazy brother has begged me to be his amanuensis ; and when a request, even were its fulfilment troublesome in any eminent degree, is made by so amiable and so universally beloved a person as he is, it is wholly beyond the power of ordinary humanity to resist or refuse—in order to make some particular inquiries concerning the state of health of the dear, interesting Thomas, to whom we are all devotedly attached : nothing indeed, my dear Mr. Gurney, contributes more essentially to the maintenance of the sentiments of high regard and fervent esteem which my bosom cherishes for your amiable brother, than the generous and paternal anxiety with which he regards the every thought and action of the dear children, who are rendered invaluable to him by the memory of their departed mother, than whom—from all I hear, not only from him,

but from other individuals who had the honour and happiness of being favoured, not only with her mere ordinary acquaintance, but with friendship which may be considered really intimate and confidential—was, if ever there was, what is colloquially called an angel upon earth, one of them in every acceptation of that very comprehensive phraseology.

“His anxiety—dear, kind-hearted man—is naturally increased in a tenfold degree by the knowledge that circumstances render it impossible for you or your dear Harriet to afford poor Thomas any personal attention, and that he is consigned to the care of the professional gentleman who attends you: he is, however, confident that every care and attention will be used with respect to his comforts, and his diet, and the gratification of all his little wishes, as far as may be consistent with the cooling regimen so essentially necessary in a case like his; and he desires me to say, that you may, at any seasonable opportunity, insinuate in the manner you may consider most effective without violating any of the delicacies and decorums of society, to which professional gentlemen are so sensitively alive, that the recovery of Master Falwasser will be an event likely to prove, in every way, advantageous to Mr. Sniggs.”

Here I laid down the letter for one minute or so, in order to think of what had passed during the last few weeks. Here was Mrs. Brandyball writing to me—the amanuensis of my brother—a stranger—an alien—dictating, in his name, to me, what to do and how to act—anticipating a carefulness and watchfulness on the part of Sniggs, which unfortunately had not existed, and promising him a reward for services which reminded me of the last line of a newspaper advertisement from a man who proposed to doctor smoky chimneys, which ran thus—“No cure, no pay.” I paused—thought—put some sugar in my cup—ate a bit of toast—sipped my tea—and having indulged myself in an audible “Well!” proceeded to read on.

“Of one thing I am quite sure—at least so far as it is permitted to human fallibility to be certain of anything—that if dear Thomas were to fall a sacrifice to the dreadful disorder with which he has been visited, it would be produc-

tive of the most serious consequences to his sensitively excellent and never-to-be-sufficiently-understood or appreciated father-in-law. As for my own personal feelings upon the subject, assure yourself, my dear Mr. Gurney, they are deeply interested in the result, independently of every other consideration, upon your account and that of your dear Harriet."

"Deuce take the woman!" said I, throwing down the letter; "what in the name of impudence and ignorance does she mean by calling *my* wife Harriet?—who wants her solicitude?—who cares for her being interested? Well!" And up I took the scrawl again.

"Poor dear Kate whose intuitive perception of things in general is so remarkable, has satisfied his mind that the infection was derived from the maid-servant in your establishment, who was generally supposed to have been infected by dear Thomas; and dear Jane, who although not so highly gifted by nature as her elder sister, possesses an extraordinary share of observation and discrimination, considering her apparent diffidence and her actual juvenility, corroborates the opinion of her eldest sister, by stating in the most unequivocal manner that Evans—I think the domestic's patronymic is Evans—told her that she felt seriously indisposed at least three days before dear Thomas experienced any inconvenience."

"The deuce take the woman!" again said I, adding a brief prayer for forgiveness; "dear Kate says this—and dear Jane says that—and dear Thomas—dear—I will *not* swear, but this is really too much—to be lectured by this Gorgon—to have an elder brother's authority delegated to a Catamaran like this! Well!—let us see—by and by I suppose I shall be charged with a design upon dear Thomas's life, and Daly's joke played off in earnest."

"All these contending circumstances prey upon your dear brother exceedingly, and I must candidly admit that I am confident that I run no risk of hazarding your displeasure by a candid expression of my genuine sentiments, that his feelings have been a little exacerbated by the omission on your part to make him acquainted with the progress of the interesting invalid."

"Why, how could I?" exclaimed I to myself. "Where the deuce was I to write to? By—but no, I won't—I'll keep my temper—that is, if I can. I'll read the infernal thing through. Oh, my poor, poor brother! to think—to fancy—to believe—Well!—let's see."

"I merely venture to insinuate what I think, and to impress upon you the necessity of communicating with him, lest at any future period I might be supposed not to have apprised you of the real state of his feelings."

"This is too plain," said I, again throwing down the epistle, and again sipping my tea, which I could, however, hardly swallow for agitation—"a future period!" Oh, she looks forward—some ulterior object—to some time when she may be reproached with hypocrisy and manœuvring. If Harriet were but well—but then she is not—if she were, we would go to Bath. But why?—then Tom—Well!"

"And especially as I repeat that a fatal termination to the dear boy's illness would produce the most serious effects upon his mind and constitution."

"Considerate creature!" said I.

"Your brother desires me to tell you that he forgot to say, till Hutton reminded him, that he has paid Binfield, the wine-merchant, up to the first of January, and that he thinks his Madeira dear and not good, and wishes you not to order any more wine of any sort of him."

This paragraph completed, as I then thought, my misery. Here was a person—a few weeks since an utter stranger to any of us—not only acting secretary between one brother and another, but entering into our domestic discussions as if she were one of the family; besides, what a topic to touch upon, to inform Mrs. Brandyball that the wine she admired and patronized so liberally at Ashmead was not mine, but Cuthbert's; and at the same time, and through the same medium, to convey a prohibitory command as to my ordering any more! But even this was not the climax, which, in fact, I was very near not reaching, so utterly upset and beaten was I by what I had already read. However, the bitter draught was destined to be drained to the dregs, and everybody knows they generally prove the bitterest portion of the whole. I therefore continued—

"Aware as you are of your excellent brother's constitutional inactivity, and the listlessness of his mind, you will scarcely give credence, even with your natural tendency to admit their influence over all his mundane transactions, to the fact—that it was not until not only dear Kate and dear Jane, and dear Kate and dear Jane's maid, Hutton, his own man, and myself, had also agreed upon the point, that he could satisfy himself whether your dear Harriet's baby was a boy or a girl. He had somehow confused in his mind the fact and the details; and I do assure you—probably his thoughts were preoccupied by his solicitude concerning poor Thomas—it was not until he found us unanimous that we induced him to fatigue his memory so far as to recall a conversation which he had with you, and which he repeated afterwards to me, when we were alone, upon the subject. What a remarkable instance of evaporative intellectuality!"

This crowned all: "evaporative Tom-foolery!" said I. The idea that the main and leading incident of my life—the birth of my son and heir, of his nephew and intended godson, should have been totally forgotten, or, if not forgotten, so thoroughly jumbled up in his brain during an absence of a few days, as to leave him in a sort of waking dream, from which it required the united efforts of the family to awaken him. The conclusion of the odious letter was made up of some fulsome compliments in the same high-flown language as characterised the rest of it; and having finished it, I threw it from me with a sort of shuddering disgust, which would have chilled me if the heat of anger had not counteracted its effects.

"So then," said I aloud, "I verily believe, my poor brother is really caught; dragged from me, and manacled in a distant part of the country: his fetters, to be sure, are covered with roses—full-blown damask roses, it must be admitted. But there he is, as undeniably lost to me, as if he had never existed. Had Gulliver been constituted as Cuthbert was, when he was hampered by the pegs and packthread of the Lilliputians, there he would have lain until they had demolished him at their leisure; the effort to raise himself upon one hand or make one half turn of his body, by which he could have extricated himself in a moment, would have been

an effort too mighty for indolence so overpowering as his ; and thus he would have perished."

I saw no chance of extrication. Mrs. Brandyball, spider like, had gotten him into her web, and was clearly besliming him every moment with compliments and attentions which would be sure to make him her own, and, Arachne like, when she had rendered him totally helpless, she would put him by in store to marry, in all probability, when the before-spoken-of Easter holidays arrived. Well, and what then? Was it by any fault of mine that this had occurred? Had I anything to reproach myself with? What sin of omission or commission had I been guilty of which ought, in any reasonable case, to have produced such results? I asked myself the question over and over again, and received from myself the same answers every time. I searched every corner of my mind in vain for one little morsel of just self-condemnation, but none could I find, and at last I worked myself up into a feeling not altogether fraternal, and wound up my soliloquy with—"Why, then, let him go to the——" I won't write what I said—let him go his own way.

This came out impromptu, and I declare free from all selfishness of feeling; but a moment's reflection brought to my view the startling fact, that if Cuthbert went to the place I thought of, wherever it might be, in one direction, I must infallibly go thither in another. He was, as I have often recorded, and oftener felt, the "prop that did sustain my house," and what was to happen if I treated this letter and its writer with the scorn they seemed to me so richly to merit? I should only seal my destiny, and inflict a wound which I was well assured no time or circumstance could heal.

Speaking of a choice of difficulties, Swift asks, "Supposing the body of the earth were a great ball of the finest sand, and that a single grain or particle of this sand should be annihilated every thousand years. Supposing that you had it in your choice to be happy all the while this prodigious mass of sand was consuming by this slow method until there was not a grain of it left, on condition that you were to be miserable ever after; or supposing that you might be happy ever after, on condition you would be miserable until the

whole mass of sand were thus annihilated at the rate of one sand in a thousand years ; which of these two cases would you make your choice ? ”

This question seemed particularly apposite and applicable to my case—“ Should I pocket all the affronts I had received, and continue dreaming on during poor Cuthbert’s life, in a sort of negative hope of his ultimate return to a just, fraternal, and equitable feeling towards me, and his consequent fulfilment of all the promises he had made, and the realization of all the expectations he had raised, or at once exhibit what nobody could deny would be a just resentment at his abandonment of me in favour of aliens to our blood in the first instance, and in the last of a perfect stranger, and, by thus giving way to my natural feelings, now decide my fate as related to the future expression of his sentiments and the consequent disposition of his property ? ”

If I had been alone—single in the world, as Cuthbert found me when we so strangely met at Gosport—I know how I should have settled the affair. I should have got rid of the difficulty much after the Hibernian manner in which Alexander *untied* the Gordian knot by cutting it : but the case was now different ; I was a husband and a father, and should not have ventured to marry, as *he* knew, had he not placed me in a position which entitled me to ask and receive such a blessing as a wife like Harriet.

Yet Harriet would have married me for myself alone,—nay, she had proved her sincerity upon that point, by subjecting herself to trials and difficulties, with a devotion, and even heroism, not to be expected from one so young and so little knowing in the wide world’s ways. What had been the expression of her sentiments upon this very subject a day or two before ? I had anticipated what would happen, had touched upon it—exactly what might have been calculated upon—and then, after all, as she said, we could be happy in a smaller house, with a smaller establishment, to be supported on a smaller income. Well, then, why not at once fire the train, return no answer to Mrs. Brandyball’s fine, figurative, free-and-easy rigmarole, but write direct to my brother a letter of remonstrance, of reproach even, and

endeavour, if possible, to rouse him to a sense of his own situation and of mine.

Of course I did not hastily put any scheme of this sort into execution, for—which, indeed, was one of the most painful parts of the business—I felt it absolutely necessary to consult Harriet, although confident of her acquiescence. Fuller says, “A good wife sets up a sail according to the keel of her husband’s estate;” and I was certain that in all she had said upon the last occasion I took of mentioning my suspicions of Cuthbert’s defection, she was as sincere and true as I had ever found her in all other matters; but it grieved me to be obliged to trouble her so far as even to grant her acquiescence. Nevertheless, *that* was my course, and I resolved to hold a council with her, so soon as any intelligence arrived from Sniggs with regard to the boy, the nature of which might greatly influence our decision, inasmuch as, if the result were fatal, I still adhered to my determination of going to Bath.

It turned out, however, that for the present that resolution was not to be put in practice, for my bulletin announced that Tom, although not better than he was last night, was not worse, the fever had not more abated, and that in fact he was much the same. As this information portended no sudden catastrophe, it became the more necessary that I should decide upon the line I meant to adopt with regard to Mrs. Brandyball’s despatch, which must be either answered somehow, or not answered at all, by return of post. I therefore rang for Foxcroft, in order to ascertain when I might present myself up-stairs, to communicate with my better half upon the subject now nearest my heart.

The faithful handmaid, who seemed, from a sort of feminine regard for my gander-like condition, and a respect, as I thought, for my parental character, most amiably attentive to all my little wants and wishes during Harriet’s temporary absence from our domestic circle, informed me that I might be received forthwith, for that her mistress was sitting up, and expecting me. This sounded like music in my ears; this first marked step in the progress towards her

restoration to society, to her return to those familiar scenes which her presence cheered and enlightened, was a set-off to all the mortifications I had just experienced, and I bounded up stairs as if I had gained some new and important object, and beheld with a pleasure I cannot attempt to describe, the beloved of my heart ensconced in a huge armed chair, looking as calm, as pale, and as placid as "Patience on a monument." That she did smile at grief, personified by her much-disturbed husband, was no small addition to my gratification; and the gentle kiss she bestowed upon me was of more value to *me* at the moment than the *accolade* of a sovereign to an expectant courtier.

The slight flush which coloured her fair cheek after this "chaste salute" gave new beauties to her countenance, and brought her back to my view, just as she looked in other days, and when I little thought she ever would be mine, as we strolled in the rectorial shrubberies. A thousand recollections filled my mind, and I felt so happy, that I dreaded to dissipate the bright vision by referring to the "order of the day," and beginning to discuss the business for her opinion upon which I had sought her.

It was absolutely necessary that something should be decided upon; and I wished to obtain her judgment upon Mrs. Brandyball's letter and its contents, free and unbiassed by anything I might say or suggest; and therefore, having prepared her for "bad news" in order that she might be rather agreeably surprised than not when she had perused it, I placed the epistle before her, and begged her calmly and quietly to read it through, while I proceeded to gaze upon my yet unchristianised boy, who lay sleeping in a swinging cot by the side of the maternal bed; and I had just fallen into a kind of reverie, in which my mind was filled with a thousand conflicting thoughts and anticipations as to the destiny of the unconscious innocent before me, when the gentle tap of Foxcroft at the door produced the gentle "Come in" of her dear mistress.

"If you please, sir," said the damsel, "Mr. Kittington is in the breakfast-room, and wishes to speak to you."

"Who?" said I.

"The dancing-master, sir," said Foxcroft.

"I dare say," said Harriet, "Cuthbert never recollected to have him paid."

"Most likely," said I. "Say I will be down directly."

Foxcroft retired smilingly, as was her wont.

"Well," said Harriet, "I never read such a letter as 'his.'"

"How far have you read?" said I.

"To where she attributes Tom's disorder to our servants," said Harriet, "and blames you for not writing to Cuthbert, when you did not know how to direct a letter to him."

"Ah," said I, "that's nothing to what you will come to presently. All I beg of you is, to keep your temper, Harriet—don't be in a passion—treat it as I do, and all will be well. I don't wish to influence your judgment, dear, but I have made up *my* mind. I suppose my Terpsichorean visiter will not keep me long. I shall be back directly—then give me your opinion;" saying which, I repeated the gentle kiss with which the council had opened, and proceeded to the breakfast-room, where I found Foxcroft kindly explaining to Mr. Kittington the peculiar beauty of what she called a "lovely gereenum," which stood just inside the conservatory, which opened into the apartment.

Mr. Kittington appeared a little embarrassed at my appearance, as did Miss Foxcroft; but ladies or ladies' maids have always a command over themselves, and an aptitude for getting out of scrapes with a presence of mind most wonderful. The pump-shod professor coloured up "ruddier than the cherry," and looked more embarrassed than usual; but Foxcroft, without moving a muscle of her countenance, no sooner saw me approach, than she let go the flower, upon which she was apparently lecturing, and said, as if she had been told to wait till I arrived, "Here is my master, sir."

They say that "they who live in glass houses should not throw stones." There are two or three other things which people so circumstanced should not do; not that I mean to infer that lecturing upon "gereenums" is one of them. Foxcroft however waggled her pretty little fantailed figure

out of the room, and left Mr. Kittington and myself *tête-à-tête*.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Kittington; "but I really am ashamed to trouble you—I——" Here he faltered, and looked silly again; "but I——"

"Pray don't mention it," said I: "I think I can almost guess——"

"Indeed, sir," said the dancing-master, "I assure you I would not have intruded upon you, but——"

I heard by anticipation the well-known sequel—"I have a very large amount to make up next week."

"But the circumstances are very peculiar."

Here he paused again.

"Pray don't apologise," said I encouragingly; "my brother, Mr. Cuthbert Gurney, is so thoughtless and indolent, that these things are frequently occurring."

"Are you aware, sir," said Kittington, "of the——"

"Oh, I know, of course," replied I; "there is no necessity for any delicacy between us, Mr. Kittington; my brother naturally expected to hear from you after your great attention to Kate and the others; but have you got it about you?"

"Yes, sir," said Kittington, "I have brought it with me. Indeed, I had no other object in calling here; but I could not have imagined that you were aware of the existence of anything of the kind."

"Why, I guessed as much," said I; "but it is of no sort of consequence."

"Indeed, sir!" said Kittington.

"There can be no objection, I am sure," said I. "I will undertake to settle it without any reference to my brother, who, as I have already said, is too indolent to take much trouble about anything."

"That is very surprising, sir!" said Kittington; "I think you must be mistaken."

"No, no," said I, smiling, "the same thing has happened often before."

Kittington here appeared somewhat astounded, and wishing to relieve him from an embarrassment which seemed to me to be more particular than the occasion required, I begged him to hand me the "document," as I facetiously

called his "bill" not liking the word, either as applied to myself or to anybody in the shape of a gentleman to whom I had to pay money.

"How far I should be justified in doing so, sir," said Kittington, "I really do not know; my position is a very delicate one, and really I am so overcome by the difficulty in which I am placed, or rather in which I have placed myself, that I am scarcely able to proceed."

"I never saw," said I, "so much delicacy on such a point. What scruples can you have in accepting what you must feel yourself justly to have acquired, and most richly to deserve? I am sure the way my niece Kitty has spoken to us of your attention and kindness fully justifies you in proffering your claims; so let us to business."

"My dear sir," said Kittington, "the manner in which you meet this subject is to me most surprising, and confounds me more than all the rest. I merely attended Miss Falwasser and her sister professionally; and—I—had no conception—she so extremely young—and—the fact is—I—really—thought I was doing my duty in mentioning the fact—because I had no idea that you were aware—in truth I—difference of rank and position—and—besides, sir, putting aside anything else, I—it is imperative I should mention that I am actually engaged to be married."

"Well, my dear sir," said I, "I am very glad to hear it, and sincerely wish you joy; but I tell you again, there needs no such explanation. What your marrying has to do with a trifle like this, a matter, no doubt, of every day occurrence with gentlemen of your profession—"

"My dear sir," said Kittington, turning alternately pale and red, "indeed, indeed, it is no such thing: such matters do now and then happen; and waltzing, I confess, between ourselves, is rather—a little conducive—but I assure you, I do not consider this by any means a trifling affair."

"Why," said I, getting rather out of patience with the mock-modesty of my companion, "what does it amount to, after all?"

"Why, sir," said Kittington, "although when I took the liberty of sending in my name, my intention was, as in duty bound,—that is, according to my own feelings, to have shown

you the note: but as it is, it involves a compromise—and—”

“Oh,” said I, “I want no compromise.”

“No, sir,” said Kittington; “but I mean Miss Katharine Falwasser may—”

“She!” exclaimed I; “no, no, she wants no compromise, you may rely upon it; you have only to ask and have; there isn’t a more liberal-hearted child in the world, whatever other faults she may possess.”

“Child!” said Kittington; “there you have used the very word—I said the difference of age between her, and—”

“And Jane,” interrupted I; “ah, there’s a difference of age, but of course Jane would not interfere in such a matter as this.”

“Oh, no,” said Kittington, “I must do Miss Falwasser the justice to say, that she distinctly asserts that Miss Jane is totally ignorant of her sister’s steps.”

“Ah,” said I, “that’s a pity, as they learned together; but Jane is not nearly so forward in anything as Kate.”

“No, no,” said Kittington, “very different characters; but I really could not have imagined that you could have been aware of the circumstances, else, as I have just said, I should not have felt it necessary to call here, but have sent direct to Miss Falwasser herself.”

“That’s perfectly useless,” said I; “don’t worry yourself for a moment; I appreciate your delicacy, and if you will let me see the document as I call it, I think the settlement will be the affair of a few minutes.”

“Well, sir,” said Kittington, “I have taken my line; I have been very much surprised at what has passed between us; I may be censured and laughed at by Miss Falwasser: it struck me I had only one course to pursue, and, having adopted that course, can have no hesitation in fulfilling my original intentions with a positive assurance that no human being, except ourselves, shall ever hear one syllable of the affair.”

This speech, delivered with a degree of seriousness and earnestness for which I certainly was not prepared, and which the delivery of a dancing-master’s bill for teaching did not appear to me to require, was terminated by his hand-

ing me a glossy musk-smelling note, of delicate dimensions, which he drew from an envelope that he held in his hand.

I thought him somewhat of a dandy before, but when I saw this odoriferous morsel make its way to the light, I set him down as the most consummate blockhead I ever met with. Having handed me the "document," he threw himself into an armed chair with a "flump" very inconsistent with his usual manner of proceeding at Ashmead, and fixed his eyes upon me with an expression of interest and curiosity, which struck me as very remarkable. I opened the "bill" and read:—

"I have struggled with my feelins ever since we parted; but I cannot conquer them. You must have seen how interesting I have thought you for some time past. I never was happy but the days you were combing, and even Jane said I was in love with you—you must know the same. I am very young, but older than I look for—I am, I know, more than sixteen; for I heard my governess say that my mamma made us out all two years younger than we really are, in order, poor dear thing, to seem younger herself. Jane does not know of this letter; but I have persuaded pappy that nobody can teach us to dance like you, and he is quite ready you should. If you would make believe you were coming to settle at Bath, you might come and call, and I know dear Mrs. Brandyball would have you here, and then, dear Henry—you see I know your dear name—I am sure pappy would not mind our being married, or if he did, we might helope, and when we came back after it was over he would forgive us in a minute.

"Do, do come, dear Henry, and then we can walk out while pappy is playing chess; and I can make Jane stay with him—do not be cross with me for this; and if you answr me, direct to me under cover to Mrs. Brandyball, and then I shall get it safe—and do send me a lock of your hair—I do love red hair so—and say you will come. I do nothing but play 'The Opera Hat, and 'Molly put the Kettle on,' the last two tunes we danced to. They have a stupid dancing-mistress at Montpelier. I never dance

now—and never shall—never will—no, nor sleep either till you come. Do come, do dear Henry.

“Yours affectionately,

“You can guess who.

“P.S. I shall have a hundred thousand pounds when pappy dies.”

“Mr. Kittington,” said I, throwing down this precious epistle, “I have a thousand apologies to make to you. I had, of course, no conception of an event like this, and, of course, could not appreciate either the honourable course you have adopted, or the agitation under which, as it appeared to me, you were unnecessarily labouring; it is needless for me to say, that I am totally unacquainted with anything concerning the proceedings of this extraordinary girl, and confined my speculations to some habitual neglect of my brother in not settling your account for tuition; but this is a blow which I was not prepared for, and yet——”

“The blow, sir,” said Kittington modestly but firmly, as if conscious of the rectitude of his conduct at the sacrifice of some *éclat*, “is, I trust, avoided. Of course I shall return no answer to the young lady’s letter, however flattering her youthful admiration may be; I resign it to you, and with it, all pretensions to any further consideration from her. I will now admit to you that I am under no matrimonial engagement; but that when I found you, as I imagined, lending yourself to an arrangement so entirely unsuitable in all its points and bearings, I ventured to put a conclusive negative upon it by what perhaps you will admit to have been a justifiable exaggeration. I am aware that there is something ludicrous associated in society with the exercise of my profession; but I trust that the adoption of that profession from necessity rather than choice, for the support of an aged mother and unmarried sister, the widow and daughter of a gentleman, whose indulgence to his spoiled and helpless son left him no means of a livelihood but by the exercise of the only calling for which he was qualified, has not stifled the feelings of honour which that indulgent father did not fail to implant in his heart. Sir, I am deeply affected by what has occurred. I need not say that no

syllable of this will be breathed by me; exonerate me only from having in any way induced this unfortunate sentiment on the part of the young lady, which, in the course of six months, will fade away and take some brighter hue. If you think I have acted justly, I am satisfied."

"Sir," said I, much moved by his manner and evident sincerity, "you have acted up to the character which you have inherited. Permit me to offer you my hand, and to assure you how sincerely I am—as we all must be—indebted to you for what you have done."

"Aware," said Kittington, "of the feelings which this disclosure must have naturally excited in your breast, I will no longer intrude—I leave the letter with you, and ——"

"Nay," said I, "stay; take some luncheon—let me beg of you to stay."

"No," said Kittington, "I must not stay—I have pupils to attend at one; and you may judge, Mr. Gurney, what the trials of a man, professing any of the lighter arts, must be, when you know that I have to devote the next two hours to teaching children to dance, while the mother, of whom I have just spoken to you, is lying on a bed of sickness and, I fear, of death. My heart, however, will be easier for what I have done this day; and, although the thoughtless Miss Falwasser may laugh at or despise me, I never shall regret the just course I have adopted."

I could make no reply. I again shook hands with him cordially, and resolved—no matter what; I rang the bell, and he left me—and left me with a new difficulty upon my hands, and one which appeared to me to be insurmountable. It was a web so complex, so intertwined, and interlaced, that I could not imagine what was to be done. It was clear that Mrs. Brandyball had lent herself to a scheme which she hoped would detach Cuthbert's greatest favourite from him eternally. The letter was to be directed under cover to *her*. If, therefore, I made a confidence with that hateful woman, she would instantly betray me to Kate. If I condescended to enter upon the subject with Kate herself, which really, considering her age, either computed or ascertained, I could not bring myself to do, she would at once fall into

a fit of rage against the dastardly dancing-master, who in so base and cowardly a manner had boasted of her affections at the moment of rejecting them; and if I approached Cuthbert himself, the very idea of charging his beloved daughter, as he called her, poor fellow! with such an attack, would have toppled me down instantaneously from the slippery ledge of his favour on which I so equivocally stood at present.

I half wished that Kittington had not been so honourable, and that he had ran away with the girl: that would have opened Cuthbert's eyes, and then, perhaps, we could have fixed the confederacy upon Mrs. Brandyball, and so have blown up (as poor Tom would liked to have done) the whole faction. But this was selfish. Kittington had behaved admirably: no fault could be found with him: but only conceive what an addition to all the difficulties with which the answer to the letter left for Harriet's perusal this incident was! It must be noticed. It could not die away. Kate would not rest content without some sort of acknowledgment of her address to her "golden-haired preeptor." There was one striking characteristic in her *billet-doux* which rendered the girl less amiable than anything else; the love part of the affair was not in my mind the worst; the feeling which I hated throughout the whole appeal was the total carelessness and callousness with regard to everything but self, which pervaded every line. As for her affectionate pappy, he was only spoken of as being easily deceived, easily imposed upon, and to leave her a fortune at his death. Her sister Jane was only noticed as being fixed as a substitute at the chess-table while she and her lover were out walking and as for her dying brother, not one syllable was bestowed on him, although the letter was going to the place where he lay on a bed of sickness. I can forgive excess of passion, I can pardon an excessive warmth of heart—but cold, calculating selfishness I cannot endure, and selfishness in a girl of fifteen or even seventeen is so unnatural a vice that it is doubly hateful. Well, up stairs I went, with my head whirling, determined not, in the first instance, to mention what had occurred: for, in fact, I was so little resolved how

to act, that I held it prudent to keep this new episode in our family history a secret at present even from Harriet.

Contrasted with the scene just ended below, was that which I beheld on entering my wife's room above. I had never beheld her angry before; but angry she was; and having been left by herself during my interview with Kittington to brood over her anger, was really quite animated: it was, however, of the gentlest nature of rage, and in its highest paroxysms never rose to fever heat. Woman-like, however, she disdained the idea of any longer affecting civility or even toleration as regarded Mrs. Brandyball, or of submitting for any ulterior consideration to her imperious sway. The reference to matters of our domestic economy, which were so strictly confidential, seemed to irritate my poor love more than anything, and the dictation about the wine and the wine-merchant, "so insolent!" "so impertinent!" "What business could Cuthbert have to tell *her*?" "As for his not recollecting whether my baby was a boy or a girl, I am glad of it," said Harriet. "He—though he is your brother—should not be its godfather, if it never had a godfather."

"Mercy on us, Harriet!" said I, laughing at the earnestness of her half-whispered rage: "why, where have you cherished all this volcanic fire which you are pouring out upon poor Cuthbert?"

"Poor Cuthbert!" said Harriet: "I wish, my dear Gilbert, it had been 'poor Cuthbert'—we should then have been humbler, and happier, and independent."

"Never mind, my dear girl," said I; "recollect we can always fall back upon that."

* With thee conversing I forget all time ;
All seasons, and their change—all please alike.'

I care as little or less than you for what are called the world's luxuries; but I do care for a brother's love. I lament the loss of that, and I think I ought to make a struggle to regain it."

"Why should you have lost it, Gilbert?" asked Harriet, naturally enough. "We did all we could to make him

happy—unfortunately my approaching confinement prevented my showing Mrs. Brandyball so much attention as I otherwise would ; but, as for Kate and——”

“Hah!” said I involuntarily.

“I am sure all the children had their way,” continued my poor wife.

“Yes, they have had their way too much,” replied I : “but looking back is useless. The question is, how we are to act upon this letter? I know exactly, by the tenor of your conversation, the course you would pursue ; but there are various things to be considered—more now than before—every hour adds new difficulties—new events transpire—in short, confusion seems worse confounded.”

“Now, then,” said Harriet, starting from her languid, listless attitude, “I know what Mr. Kittington has been here about.”

I stared with astonishment.

“What” said I, with affected surprise, “can Mr. Kittington’s calling here have to do with our decision upon that letter?”

“Everything, Gilbert,” said Harriet, shaking her head, as much as to deprecate my efforts at mystification. “It won’t do, Gilbert ; she has written him a love-letter.”

“Why, Harriet,” said I, thrown off my guard completely. “that girl Foxcroft has been listening?”

“Not she, upon my honour, that I know of,” said Harriet ; “and I am not particularly grateful to you for supposing that I should pick up information by any such means ; however, you have let out the secret, which was no secret to me ; for although I was ignorant of the actual fact, I had seen enough of Miss Kitty’s conduct to the man to be quite prepared for such an event. So, then, we shall afford conversation for the whole county.”

“No, love, no,” said I ; “you have, with all a woman’s prescience, hit upon the truth ; but the secret is safe in the keeping of Mr. Kittington.”

“Is that likely?” said Harriet.

“I will pledge my honour,” said I ; “but let me implore you to be equally cautious—not even to your mother drop a hint of the circumstance. The disclosure has laid a new

load of difficulties upon us, and what is to be done must form a new feature of our present debate. Here is the precious epistle, in which the advantages of a brilliant boarding-school education develop themselves, not only in the expression of feelings and sentiments suited to other ages and stations than those of Miss Kitty, but in occasional orthographical *spells*, which prove, as Foote said of the "Agoos" which were "kurd hear," that the young ladies' fascinations are not spells. Upon my life the thing is so ridiculous that I cannot bring myself to be serious, however serious in point of fact the consequences may be."

Saying which, I tossed the odoriferous *morceau* into her lap, and watched her as she read it.

"Exactly, what I expected," said Harriet, as she laid down the note. And it appeared that her intuitive apprehension of the course likely to be pursued by Miss Kitty Falwasser was in some degree strengthened by the accounts which little—now growing big—Bettina—the amiable Betsy Wells—gave of the young lady's conversation and remarks upon "men and things," which were carried on and made in terms and in a tone that startled poor Betsy, but who, being two or three years older, used to listen to them, in order, as she told her sisters, to endeavour to correct her junior's morals and amend her taste. I remember to have heard of a nobleman who engaged a governess in France who could not speak a word of English, in order that his daughter, whom he placed under her care, should learn French, through the acknowledged impossibility of speaking to the young preceptress in any other language. The plan did not however succeed to the fullest extent, for the young lady, preferring her native tongue, continued to speak it until the French governess had learnt it, when the necessity for their conversing in any other ceased. Whether any similar effect was to be dreaded from Betsy Well's attempts at the inculcation of morality and steadiness into Miss Kitty's mind, I do not pretend to say.

"Well, then," said Harriet, "it seems to me that we cannot possibly get out of all our difficulties, so let us give it up at once; send this charming letter to Cuthbert, and let him see the real merits and virtues of his delightful adopted daughter-in-law, and—"

"No, no," said I; "recollect we have poor Tom under our charge—let us not hastily overthrow the fabric of family affection. Cuthbert has been duped and imposed upon, but all his feelings are kindly—"

"To others, Gilbert," said Harriet.

"Not so only," replied I, for I could not overcome my brotherly feeling on the instant; "he has done much for me, and will do more. I must consider before I act: he has left a boy here whom he dearly loves."

"What a taste!" said Harriet.

"We must not judge of hearts by tastes, Harriet," said I. "Cuthbert feels bound to poor Tom Falwasser for his mother's sake, and tenderness in a step-father cannot be accounted a vice. No, I must wait and hear how the lad is, and then——"

"And then, my dear Gilbert," said Harriet, "only recollect that whatever our feelings may be towards your brother, we are not to be subjected to the government of Mrs. Brandyball."

"There it is," said I.

"And as for Kate," added my wife, "if this affair is kept from him, and anything goes wrong with her afterwards, who will be blamed?—Why, you, my dear Gilbert, because you did not give him warning of her earlier proceedings."

"That's true," said I, "very true. But if I can send him good news of the boy, and prove to him our solicitude on his account, I am sure—although, as this woman says, he feels now a little hurt—unreasonably, I admit—at my silence, which was unavoidable—he will come round, and all will be well; and as for Kate——"

Here Foxcroft's tap summoned me to the door. I went.

"Jim, the groom-boy, wants to speak to you, sir; he is just run up from Mr. Sniggs's."

"Oh!" said I; and leaning over the balustrades, called to the lad to come to me.

"Well," said I, "what's the message?"

"Whoy, zur," said Jem, stepping close up to me, and whispering, "Mr. Sniggs's compliments—if you please, zur, **MASTER TOM'S DEAD!**"

CHAPTER XII.

THIS intelligence, for which I certainly was by no means prepared, lost none of its effect by the tone and manner in which it was communicated by the boy. The suddenness with which all the hopes Sniggs had encouraged were dissipated, and a fatal result produced, added greatly to my sorrow and regret. In an instant every prospect was changed, and every proposition which I had suggested to myself as to my future conduct in my really trying and difficult situation altered. The worst that I had anticipated had happened at a moment when I did not expect it, and the darkness of my fate acquired new gloom from the contrast it afforded to the gleam of expectation produced by the apothecary's last note and bulletin.

"Is Mr. Sniggs coming here?" said I to the boy, when I had sufficiently recovered my composure to speak.

"Ees, zur," said the boy; "he be a-laying Master Tom out, I think; and when he ha done that, Doctor says he'll step up and tell ye all about it."

The combination of ideas which flashed into my mind; the association of the painful duty, of which the groom spoke so carelessly, with Sniggs's subsequent visit to Ashmead. and my continued dread of the infection, made me shudder; and I could have killed the fellow for having been so communicative upon a point so painful. He evidently saw nothing in his narrative calculated to excite any particular sensation on my part. His feelings were purely animal; and if it be true, as the naturalists tell us, that animal feeling is proportionably more or less acute according to the size of the animal itself, it is likewise equally true that mental sensibility decreases in the exact ratio of enlightenment and civilization.

I dismissed the groom from further parlance, and returned to Harriet, who seemed less surprised than I expected when I announced the catastrophe. Tears started into her eyes; but she was too ingenuous and too artless to conceal from me the fact that her distress was occasioned rather by the antici-

pation of what might be the consequences of the boy's death as connected with *me*, than by the event itself.

"What a thing to happen at such a time!" said she, "and to happen from the thoughtlessness or carelessness of the people to whose special care he was confided."

"Upon that point, Harriet," I replied, "it is not worth while to waste a thought; it may or may not be *that* which has produced this result; but, after all, nobody could have foreseen that a boy of his age would, under the circumstances, have done so mad a thing: that, however, is over and past recal, and the less said about it the better; for, if Cuthbert once heard of it, the fate of the unhappy Sniggs and his wife would be sealed. Let us consider what is now to be done: I suppose my original intention had better be put into execution—I had better start for Bath and break the affair to Cuthbert myself?"

"I don't know," said Harriet; "Papa always says, never be the bearer of bad news."

"Yet," said I, "it is impossible to write this history—what can I—what ought I to do?"

"Consult papa," said Harriet; "the stories which he tells of himself in early life, justify you in applying to him. He never was at a loss—"

"True," said I; "but then he never was placed in such an extraordinary predicament. How I wish, my dear girl, that Cuthbert had not met me at Gosport, and that you and I had gone——"

"Where?" said Harriet—for the sound sense of a woman always prevails—"where should we have gone to?—to a place which he had left, and then we should have had to come——"

"Bock again," said I, "as the Scotchman said when his leg was over the man's wall—that's true; and bad as things look, my girl, I will still cling to my creed, and say everything is for the best. I'll go—"

"That will be for the worst," said Harriet; "you have never left me since we were married—I can't bear your absence."

"Psha!" said I. "An affair of three days, or four at most."

"Yes," said Harriet, "the time seems short, but only recollect what is to happen during that period—what events are to be told—what effects to be produced; your brother, if left to himself, would, I have no doubt, be as reasonable as he is, I believe, affectionate; but worked upon by active, artful people, depend upon it, my dear Gilbert, the whole thing will be misrepresented, and—

"I am quite aware of *that*," said I; "but the question to be considered is, whether my personal presence and a *vivâ voce* description of what has happened would not conduce more to his tranquillisation than a letter: the letter, recollect, would be open to the review and criticism of the whole crew—Mrs. Brandyball leading the van. If I go, I am there myself to explain, and describe and modify. I had better go."

I saw that Harriet still thought I had better not. However, considering that during my absence she would be surrounded by her own family and occupied in attending to mine—if the word could be applicable to one little baby—I felt less difficulty in leaving her, the more especially as my stay at Cuthbert's would be so extremely short.

My deliberations and consultations, however, were broken in upon by the arrival of Sniggs, the announcement of whose name in connexion with the duty which, according to the groomboy's account, he had been performing, produced something like a shudder on my frame, but *what*, of course, it was most essential I should see. I accordingly went down stairs, and am almost ashamed to own how unwillingly; suffice it to say, without attempting to describe them, that my feelings, whatever they were, were by no means moderated by seeing both my pet dogs worrying about and sniffing the worthy apothecary's clothes, as if they were aware of the presence of an odour which might breathe infection in my yet untainted house. I drove them out of the room with an abruptness of manner and severity of tone very unusual with me in my intercourse with dumb animals.

"Well, sir," said Sniggs, "this is a sad business; I had hoped better things: however, it is a consolation to myself

and Mrs. Sniggs to know that everything was done that could be done."

Yes, thought I, and something more than need have been done.

"I never saw an instance where fever increased so rapidly—it was irresistible—an effusion of blood on the brain terminated the struggle. Poor fellow! he suffered greatly during the night and became delirious, and at the last was quite unconscious of what was passing—when will he be buried, sir?"

"That is a matter upon which I can say nothing till I have seen my brother," said I.

"You propose going to him, then?" said Sniggs.

"I think so."

"Because," continued the apothecary, "it struck *me* that, perhaps, having had charge of him, having attended him, and watched him through the progress of the disease, it might have been in some degree consolatory and satisfactory to Mr. Gurney if I were to go to him myself: I could explain more correctly and minutely the circumstances of the case, and——"

"But," said I, "your patients here!"

"Oh," said Sniggs, "I can arrange all that—my friend Pillman would take charge of *them*; besides, my own assistant is perfectly able to do that. This is no time for joking; but you know what Pillman said to the bishop who refused to ordain him, because he was not properly qualified——"

"He said, 'My lord, I regret this refusal more for the sake of others than myself—it may cause the death of hundreds.' 'How so, sir?' said the bishop. 'Why, my lord' replied Pillman, 'if I do not get into the church, I must follow my father's profession, and practise physic.'"

Sniggs, I fancy, saw in the expression of my countenance that I did not particularly admire the tone and manner of his conversation at such a moment; for he suddenly threw an extra proportion of grief into his strange-looking features, and inquired in a mournful tone whether I approved of his proposal.

It struck me that it would be an exceedingly good plan; but I determined not to sanction it without further consultation in the family cabinet. It was not difficult to discover divers and sundry reasons why the active son of Æsculapius was both ready and willing to undertake the expedition.

In the first place he would show his anxiety and sympathy: in the second, he would explain the case more favourably for himself, carefully concealing, no doubt, the episode of the cherry-brandy, which as I felt, although I did not admit, had mainly contributed to the catastrophe; and, in the third place, his extra attention and rapid journey, to the manifest prejudice and neglect of all his other patients, would give him a substantial claim upon Cuthbert's liberality, which, after the melancholy termination of the boy's illness, might probably require some powerful stimulants in the way of counteracting the grief and disappointment of the hopes he had entertained of the apothecary's skill.

"Well," said I, "I will go and talk this over with Mrs. Gurney; and if we agree in thinking your scheme available, when shall you be ready to start?"

"In an hour," said Sniggs. "I have given all the necessary orders with respect to the body, and everything will go on perfectly well in my absence, subject to such instructions as Mr. Gurney may give me, which of course I shall hurry back to fulfil."

"Will you wait five minutes?" said I.

"I am at your orders," replied Sniggs. "I don't know whether it is quite luncheon time, but if it is—and I assure you I am deuced hungry—hav'n't had time to eat a morsel this morning—and you are for my going, I would take a snack, which would save time, and I could order horses as I went by the King's Head, and so come round here for your letter."

"Luncheon you shall have," said I, not entirely forgetting what his morning's occupations had been, and wondering only that they should be in any degree conducive to a good appetite. I ordered the luncheon to be hurried, and went up-stairs to Harriet.

It was a rule in the navy in war time, and which I believe

is sometimes observed in a period of profound peace, that a captain of a man-of-war was never to sail with his wife on board his ship, inasmuch as, aware of the tremendous and overwhelming influence of woman, the Admiralty thought her presence might shake the bravest of men, and that the sight of her anxieties and sufferings for *him* personally might unnerve the strongest mind that the disposition of Providence ever assigned to humanity. By a parity of reasoning in a matter of infinitely inferior importance, I ought not to have consulted Harriet, whose anxiety for my remaining at home had been already so decidedly manifest, upon the delicate question of staying or going to Cuthbert; still I had perfect confidence in her ingenuousness, and so strong a conviction of the entire disinterestedness of women, when the results were not likely to be vitally serious to a beloved object (as I flattered myself I was), that I forthwith repaired to my better half, stated the proposal of Sniggs, and asked her what she thought of it.

It was quite superfluous to wait for her answer—at least in words; the bright sparkle of her eye, and the delight which beamed in her countenance, told me her opinion; and I believe she was perfectly right: the more readily, perhaps, because I had already made up my mind to the judiciousness of the new arrangement. So far, so good; but as she expressed a desire that I should communicate with her father, I agreed to wait until he could be summoned into council. Now, as luck would have it, although events seldom turn up propitiously, who should walk himself into the hall of Ashmead just at this critical juncture but Wells; and, to say truth, pleased as I always was to see and welcome him to my home, I never was more gratified by hearing that he had arrived, and joined Sniggs in the dining-room, where *à l'ordinaire* the noontide board had been spread.

"Nothing can be better," said Wells, after having heard the proposition; "write, my dear Gilbert, such a letter as your heart will dictate; let our friend be its bearer, and then only consider the weight that his description of the pains and care which have been taken in poor Tom's case will have with your brother, already greatly prepossessed in his favour."

"Exactly so," said Sniggs. "I know every turn and

snade of the disease—have minutely watched each change—made minutes of the prognosis—all down in black and white—and I think Mr. Gurney will have every reason to be satisfied with my conduct.”

“ Besides,” said Wells to me, in one of the windows to which we had retired, “ you will get rid of the necessity of alluding to other subjects, to which, if you went, you must unquestionably refer.”

I looked innocent.

“ I mean about the dancing-master,” said Wells. “ You could not see Cuthbert or the girl without touching upon *that*.”

“ What ?” said I.

“ Pshaw !” said Wells ; “ what’s the use of making those ‘ damnable faces ?’ as Shakspeare has it. I know all. You have a wife ; so have I : do you suppose such a story could be shaken in a family colander without running through ? Mum ! not another word : the world say that a secret is a great thing for one, a charming thing for two, and nothing for three ; but we are tied, I know, and it goes no farther : but you could not, I repeat—it would be impossible, and if not impossible, in the highest degree improper, for you to see your brother without telling him the whole of that business. What would be the consequence ? A split either between Kitty and you, or Cuthbert and you. Let well alone. You have no business to go out of your way to interfere : here the opportunity offers ; nothing can be more attentive or respectful than that the medical man who has attended the boy should instantly proceed to the man who engaged his attentions, in order to report the state of the case. The responsibility is entirely shifted from your shoulders ; and while this manifestation of deep interest is made by the person immediately employed, the expression of your own feelings will come with double force. I would,” added Wells, “ tell him how readily you would obey the slightest intimation on *his* part of a wish to see you. If he desired you to visit him, you would go, the road smoothened, the great difficulty overcome ; he would know the painful truth not from *you*, and be delighted to enjoy your society, as calculated to soothe his wounded feelings.”

"I am quite prepared to adopt the plan," said I, "not only because I like it myself, but because it meets with your concurrence. So be it, then. I will sit down and write such a letter as I feel I ought to write; and Sniggs shall carry the intelligence and describe the particulars, take all his directions as to the funeral, and return forthwith to obey them. We are agreed, Sniggs," said I, leaving the recess in which our colloquy had taken place; "you *shall* go, tell your own history, and come back with all the necessary instructions; and assure my brother, besides what I shall write, that I will take care that every wish that he expresses shall be realized to the letter."

Sniggs seemed greatly elated by the decision, and somewhat invigorated by three or four glasses of wine, and two ditto of not particularly weak ale, with which he had washed down his luncheon, expressed what really did not seem an unreasonable wish, that, if I did not particularly want my chariot, my lending it to him would very much accelerate his journey, inasmuch as it would obviate the delay of changing chaises.

"Sniggs is right," said Wells; "the fact that he comes in your carriage will exhibit a new proof to Cutlibert of the interest you take in the business. Quite right—that is it."

"And," said Sniggs, "there is one word more I would say—we are among friends—and I have no difficulty in saying that—upon my life, I hardly know how to mention it either—but, the truth is, that I have not at command enough——"

"Oh!" said I, stopping him, "of course, you are to be at no charge for this trip; it is business, and business of ours. No, no! I'll arrange all that. You shall have that point settled immediately." And I accordingly went to my library and drew a cheque for forty pounds, which I begged him to get cashed at the bank (for we *had* a bank at Blissford), and appropriate as much of the amount as was necessary to defray the charges of the journey.

"Liberal soul!" said Sniggs of me to Wells, as he afterwards told me; "by Jove, sir, he ought to be the rich brother of the two, and will, I conclude, eventually be so. Wonderful to see how wealth and stinginess go hand in

hand. You know those people who sit just over you at church—the girls with green pelisses and red bonnets, like a little pair of parroquets who can't live single—the Kurmichens ;—their father, when he was alive, was the stingiest dog going ;—cellars full—binns topped up, and all that—never gave any wine after dinner ; but went on like a house in the Old Town of Edinburgh, story upon story, to save his claret—never could get him to bleed. So, one day, giving a description of a friend of his who had fallen blind in consequence of consulting a celebrated oculist, he said, 'Gad, sir! Buggins is as blind as a beetle—can't see any more than that bottle.' Whereupon one of the visitors, a wag of the first water, said, 'Then our cases are exactly alike, sir, for we can see no more than that bottle ; we wish we could.' He! he! that's not bad."

"On the contrary," said Wells ; "but I don't believe Gurney's brother is at all parsimonious. All that I fear is, his being led away—influenced to turn his liberality into channels which ought never to have been dug—that Mrs. Brandyball——"

"Mum!" said Sniggs ; "I know a good deal about her—more than I ever thought I should. People *will* talk ; and there is a person in Blissford who knew the husband's nephew—not that ever I peep or pry—I never poke *my* nose into other people's concerns : but one can't stop his ears, and I receive—however, it is no affair of mine."

"I cannot help thinking," said Wells, "that she *has* a great influence over Mr. Gurney."

"Influence!" said Sniggs : "you have no notion what she is, if what I am obliged to hear is true. However, Mr. Wells, my maxim is to listen to all, and say nothing, and therefore I hope to stand well with all parties."

Wells made one of his acquiescent bows, which went for little ; for although he himself had been quieted down by time, the crack of the whip was not more familiar to the old coachman's ear, than were the professions made by the worthy apothecary of a total disinclination from the failing of tittle-tattle, or of the still more important crime of scanmag.

"Of course," said Wells, "you will represent our good

friend Gilbert's conduct in a proper light. The fact is, we could not pay any immediate personal attention to the poor lad——"

"Nor was any necessary," said Sniggs, warming with the subject and the sherry. "I declare, Mr. Wells, that not a thing was left undone that could be done to save him. His constitution had been undermined by previous indulgence; he was a self-willed boy, too; and his diet had been loosely attended to; or rather, his appetite had been gratified at the cost of his health ever since he came to England. More lives are lost, and more constitutions destroyed, by a reckless indulgence in early youth, than by any other things in the world. However, poor lad, he is gone. I suppose Mr. Gurney will have a tablet put up in the church to his memory. If so, I shall venture to recommend Clipstone. You know Clipstone, sir?"

"Yes," said the Rector; "who lives opposite the Plough."

"Exactly, sir," said Sniggs. "Valuable family—very estimable people—always ailing—wife, Mrs. C., never well—camphorated julep and concomitant brandy-and-water; eldest daughter epileptic—powders incessantly; the son hepatitis—calomel *ad libitum*; Elizabeth's slight touch of scrofula—calls it rheumatism—do what I can; the two younger boys mal-conformation of chest. Father excellent man—full of talent—with a taste in tombstones quite remarkable. I think he will do a smart slab for Tom, on the most moderate terms."

Considering that poor Tom, for whose smart slab Sniggs was in his own mind bargaining, had been dead some few hours only, the conversation struck Wells as somewhat abrupt and even premature; but the fact was, that Sniggs, having obtained, or being about to obtain, his credentials for the mournful embassy upon which he was going, and, moreover, having the promise of means to grease the wheels of my carriage on the journey, totally cast off the grief which he at first felt it his duty to assume, and which it is, as I have before observed, scarcely reasonable to expect a medical man in tolerable practice really to feel. Indeed, if he *did* feel strongly during the progress of a disease, his judgment might be affected by that very sensibility, and he

might be rendered incapable of doing his duty steadily and fearlessly—a point most essential under such circumstances.

It was about this period of the conversation, as Wells afterwards told me, that I re-entered the dining-room, and put into Sniggs's hand the check of which I had spoken. In consequence of my lending him my carriage, the horses were to be ordered up to Ashmead, and he was to return, after having had his portmanteau and *sac de nuit* packed, and sent up by his footboy with the pale face and glazed hat, and to start from my door in an hour from the then present time, which hour I was to devote to the concoction of my letter to Cuthbert.

About half-past two, Sniggs armed with his check, departed, and Wells, who never could resist a joke—not unseemly to his cloth—directed my attention to the uncertain course taken by the worthy apothecary from the hall-door down towards the gates of Ashmead—there was an unconscious adherence to the line of beauty which would have delighted Hogarth himself. Whether the elevation of our practitioner was attributable more to the draught he had swallowed, or the draft which he had deposited in his pocket, we did not attempt to ascertain. Certain it was, that in the midst of his sorrow for Tom, he was happy for himself, and I have no doubt saw before him a bright prospect of patronage and support from my poor dear brother—whose most sanguine hopes he had frustrated, by lending his involuntary aid to the removal, from this sublunary world of troubles, of Master Thomas Falwasser.

As soon as he was clear of the lodge, I sat down and wrote what I thought the best possible letter to my brother—expressing our united griefs at the sad event, and referring him for particulars to the bearer. I entreated him to let me know what he wished me to do with regard to the necessary ceremonies to be performed, and assured him that his directions should be fulfilled to the letter. I made all proper inquiries after the two young ladies, and desired my best compliments to Mrs. Brandyball, whose letter I should have answered, had not the melancholy occurrence changed the whole course of events. I made Harriet join in the kindest

embrances to him, with a proper proportion of condolence, and her best regards to his daughters, as he called, and, I believe, really fancied them; and at last obtained her permission to send a civil message to the gentle Mrs. B. herself. This, I admit, was extracted; but as I argued that it was as well to be at peace with all, at such a season, Harriet at last complied.

In less than an hour the horses came—the Sniggs boy, with the trunk and bag, and the Sniggs himself, dressed in deep mourning, with a four inch crape round his hat, and a face to match. I had a few minutes' *tête-à-tête* conversation with him, in which I stated my wishes as to the manner in which he should explain most clearly how totally I had been incapacitated from paying any personal attentions to poor Tom, and wound up our dialogue by saying to him, "I think, Mr. Sniggs, you had better not say anything about the cherry-brandy."

"Not a word," said Sniggs, looking excessively foolish.

This parting admonition I considered a masterpiece of policy, inasmuch as, if he did not pursue the exact course I had laid down for him in his conversation with Cuthbert, it reminded him that I had the fact in store to overthrow all his professions of unremitting attention to his amiable patient.

Before the clock struck four, the carriage was ready, and all his traps being disposed of, in and about the vehicle, the excellent apothecary deposited himself in the inside, and the palefaced urchin with the glazed hat having mounted into the rumble, away they drove, to my inexpressible delight in having been so strangely delivered from what could not have failed to be the most painful and embarrassing expedition I had ever undertaken. When the traveller was out of sight, I proceeded to Harriet to announce the fact of his departure, and to deliberate upon the probable issue of his expedition, and then I found that Fanny and her lover had quarrelled; the cause of their quarrel I concluded was trifling, and, believing in the certainty of the consequences of the *iræ amantium*, I merely smiled at the absurdity of their "fall out," as Miss Foxcroft would have called it.

"My dear Harriet," said I, "we have enough upon our

hands at present with our own affairs, do not let us meddle with those of others; rely upon it the hostile parties will, before the day is over, make it up, kiss, and be friends again."

"I doubt that," said Harriet. "The cause of their difference I do not yet know; but Fanny hints at its being something important, and she is not a girl to take offence unreasonably or hastily. Papa is not in the least aware of it, whatever it is: however, this evening she will be here, and I shall know the particulars."

"I tell you, Harriet," said I, "before this evening comes the quarrel will be over, so let us talk of matters more immediately interesting. It strikes me that Cuthbert will wish poor Tom to be buried somewhere near his present residence, which, I think, seems likely to be a permanent one; in that case I shall, of course, consider it my duty to accompany his remains. My meeting with Cuthbert will, however painful, be less irksome than it would be at present, inasmuch as he will be acquainted with all the melancholy facts of the case."

"You must act as your judgment dictates," said Harriet, "and according to circumstances. My belief is, that he is so completely under the influence of Mrs. Brandyball, that it will be to her that we shall have to look for instructions."

"I have no doubt," said I, "that her object will be to cast all possible blame upon *us*; and certainly, if I am likely to be subjected to any censure from Cuthbert in *her* presence or under *her* suggestion, I shall altogether abstain from visiting him, let the consequences be what they may."

It is hardly worth recording the various conversations which occurred between Harriet and myself upon this engrossing and embarrassing topic. The tone and spirit of her observations and suggestions evinced a higher degree of indignation towards Cuthbert's weakness, and a greater restlessness under the weight of his previous favours, than I could induce myself to feel. To be sure, the tie of relationship which moderated *my* sentiments upon his extraordinary conduct, was not binding upon *her*; but I must say I never expected to see her so much excited upon any serious subject as she was, whenever the dependency of our position made itself evident in the course of our discussions.

The windows of Ashmead were darkened, and the

heavy bell of Blissford church was tolled. To my ear the tolling was most discordant, and reminded me, as the sound ever did, of that which I first heard in hastening to Teddington to receive my poor kind mother's last blessing. The impression made upon me that morning never will, never can be effaced; and perhaps, after all, my rooted antipathy to bells has its origin in that occurrence. The day passed on till dinner-time, the usual time of meeting in a family. My father-in-law and I dined *tête-à-tête*. Mrs. Wells and Fanny were to come to Harriet in the evening—Lieutenant Merman was gone on a little excursion—for that I was prepared. Wells seemed unconscious of the reason of his absence, and I, really hating the disagreeable “son of Mars,” as he would be figuratively called by the gentlemen of the press, was glad to let him and all his turmoils sink into oblivion, while I still “harped,” as the immortal bard has it, upon the one subject nearest my heart.

“That Merman,” said the Rector “is a very odd man, Gurney.”

“Is he?” said I.

“His violence is quite extraordinary upon the most ordinary occasions,” said Wells, “You know me pretty well—you know I give and take—all fair in conversation: and as I consider—nobody knows himself, to be sure—but, as I consider myself, I take myself to be an averaged good-humoured man. Well, yesterday, I was playfully discussing a variety of topics upon which he and I ordinarily disagree, and after vindicating institutions which he underates and vilifies, and maintaining principles which he ridicules, I happened to tell him an anecdote—you know I am not over particular upon such points—which occurred to myself when I was for a short time examining-chaplain to my excellent connexion and patron the Bishop. A young man came for examination, and it so happened that the Bishop had no Greek Testament at hand—the thing occurred in London—Bishop asked me—I had not one, and so, without saying anything more, I went and got hold of the first book I could find, and examined my young friend in Latin—he succeeded to my heart's content, but it so happened that the

book was Lucian *De Morte Peregrini*, a tract which he wrote against Christianity. I told the thing as a joke, upon which this Merman drew up and looked grave, and went off to the women, and I have never seen him since. I believe, by Jove, that a man ought never to joke with a dullard; he takes as matter of fact that which is really matter of fun;—and, rely upon it, Merman is an ass, though I say it, who shouldn't."

"I had no idea," said I, "that the Lieutenant was strait-laced."

"Nor I," said Wells, "except in his uniform; nor does the history of his affair with Miss Maloney go quite smooth with me."

I saw by this reference to what had been a healed wound, that the Rector was what may be called "put out," and that Harriet, when she spoke of the seriousness of the difference between the Lieutenant and her sister, was not altogether wrong in treating it as a matter of importance.

"The gentleman," said Wells, "has marched himself off; and between you and me, Gilbert, if he never was to march himself back again, I should not much care."

"But," said I, "my dear sir, matters seem to have gone so far now, and he has been so unequivocally received as one of the family that——"

"Psha!" interrupted the Rector, "what of *that*? It requires time to know a man. His manner last night was extremely offensive to me; and from what I afterwards saw in the drawing-room, I don't think that the sequel was much more agreeable to Fanny."

"Fanny," said I, "is a kind-hearted, ingenuous girl, and devoted to you: and if she thought that anything the Lieutenant said was meant to vex and annoy you, my belief is that she would seriously resent it."

"So do I," said Wells; "and—this is of course between ourselves—my notion is—I may be wrong—that the way in which he caught up a mere fact—a truth—a thing which did occur, but which I perhaps might as well not have repeated, except as I did repeat it under my own roof, and in what I considered my own family, is attributable to some new change in his affair with his aunt and the fortune; and

that the indignation which he expressed at the mode in which he had been treated by the heiress, has been by some means or other modified and moderated, and that he is now anxious, late as it is in the course of our acquaintance, to break off the connexion."

"If Fanny say Yea," exclaimed I, "let it be so—he is not the man to make any woman happy, and much less my sister-in-law."

"I have heard nothing," said Wells, "of what occurred between Fan and him. I merely spoke of his extraordinary conduct, and a determination on my own part not to submit to a line of behaviour which he is by no means entitled to adopt in my house."

I now began to think, from seeing Wells infinitely more excited than I had ever found him, that the quarrel between Fanny and her intended was a "mighty pretty quarrel as it stood," and that, however far advanced the negotiations of the high contracting powers actually were, I might even yet have the satisfaction of seeing them frustrated. It must be admitted that the little *contretems* occurring at the moment was somewhat unseasonable, and yet I can scarcely tell why I did not so much dislike it, inasmuch as it presented "a diversion" (in the military sense of the word) from the "Siege of Troubles" by which we were assailed.

When I had enjoyed a *tête-à-tête* with Harriet, I found that Fanny's anger as regarded the Lieutenant was by no means ill-founded. He, without principle, either religious or moral, that anybody had ever yet discovered, chose to arraign Wells's conduct in describing—probably without any serious foundation—the circumstances of the examination; *he*, Merman, not knowing Lucian from Lucretius, and evidently seizing upon a point in conversation of no importance to *him*, at all events, to make a quarrel. Fanny told her sister that the mode in which the Lieutenant spoke of her father and his conduct as what he called himself, "a Christian preacher and teacher," was such that it was to her as incomprehensible as it was unbearable—that he had reproached her with her want of fortune; expressed in strong terms the condescension which he had evinced on his part, in returning to her after his disappointment; and in short, con-

ducted himself with so much abruptness, to call it by no other term, that she had resolved to take her own course upon it without communicating the details to her father, whose high spirit, notwithstanding the difference of their ages and professions, might lead him into some extremity with regard to his intended son-in-law, which would be most distressing under all circumstances, and probably disastrous under some.

The facts were these: what the motives to action on the part of Lieutenant Merman might be, remains to be explained; I admit that although I still dwelt upon the one sad and important theme in which our destinies were unquestionably involved, I was not ill-pleased that this little contention had arisen, inasmuch as it naturally occupied Harriet's mind, and held out to me the prospect of getting rid of a connexion with a man the most odious I had ever fallen in with, and the least likely, as I sincerely believed, to make my kind-hearted sister-in-law a happy woman.

Two days rolled on—the Lieutenant did not return—neither did Fanny receive any letter from him; and so far all that part of our family was involved in mystery and surmise; not so we; the morning of the third day from poor Tom's death brought us a letter from Sniggs, who wrote word that he had arrived safely at Montpelier—that he had communicated the sad story to my poor brother Cuthbert, who was so much overcome as to be utterly unable to decide what he should wish to have done. Sniggs added, in a postscript, that he had expressed himself perfectly satisfied with his care and attention, and that of Mrs. Sniggs, towards the innocent sufferer; but regretted that when I knew the dear child was on the point of death, I had not gone to catch the last wishes of his life from his dying lips, and that Mrs. Brandyball had said, sobbingly, “It was most extraordinary how anybody so nearly connected with the dear boy could have abstained from visiting him in his illness.”

“Monstrous!” I exclaimed to myself. “The woman knew that one visit might have been as fatal as his constant occupation of his room at Ashmead—that the existence of my first, my only infant, depended upon care and caution: and what she did not know, perhaps, was, that up to the

moment when I abruptly heard of his death, I was led on by the flattering representation of Sniggs to look for his recovery. These are the things that sting one to the heart—misrepresentations which one has no means of correcting—falsehoods which one has no opportunity of controverting. Sniggs said the way in which Mrs. Brandyball was affected was something quite maternal, and added, “If you could only see, my dear sir, the devoted attention of this excellent lady to your dear brother, you would feel inclined to worship her.”

This from Sniggs!—“Et tu, Brute!”—and after what he had hinted—not to *me*, but to Wells. This was indeed

“—— the most unkindest cut of all!”

But it was perhaps natural—he was playing *his* game with Cuthbert—expatiating on his carefulness, and watchfulness, and constant superintendence. If Mrs. Brandyball had occupied poor Tom’s room at Sniggs’s two nights before he went into it, and the cupboard had been open, my opinion is, that Tom would have been alive now—for certain is it, that the searching eye and sensitive nose of the convivial dame, would have discovered the potion which killed *him*, but would only have comforted *her*. Sniggs informed me that I was to hear again to-morrow, so that *he* had made good his footing at Montpelier; and then he tells me of the wonderful improvement in Kate’s appearance in that short time: that Mrs. Brandyball thought Ashmead unwholesome; that Jane was looking more rosy; and that, although dreadfully upset by the melancholy intelligence he had received, Cuthbert himself was marvellously better, as far as health went. When I had read the letter to Harriet she perfectly coincided with me—Sniggs was now joined in the conspiracy against us, and the influence of the Gorgon had been successfully exerted to link *him* to the faction by which we were to be sacrificed. Still we were left in suspense: not one line from Cuthbert to me—not a syllable in the way of invitation thither—not a mention of when or where the funeral was to be performed; all things seemed to be at a stand-still, waiting, I supposed, until my unfortunate brother could be shaken out of his reverie to come to a resolution.

I confess Sniggs's letter was something more than I expected—it was a new grievance, a new affront. I had sent him in my own carriage, a messenger from myself, and to receive his answer and not a word from the nearest relation I had in the world—no, not even Mrs. Brandyball had condescended to put pen to paper. I felt myself now really fallen, and I am not ashamed to own that I sobbed with grief at the loss of a brother to whom I, and those who belonged to me, had devoted every effort and energy to make him happy and comfortable, and who *was* happy and comfortable before this fiend in scarcely human shape had inveigled him away from us.

There was something in Sniggs's letter which sounded reproachful, evidently dictated, or rather occasioned by other people; and when I began to calculate and consider all the circumstances, I could not help beginning to fancy that there really was something in my conduct which might be construed into a want of feeling, not only by Cuthbert, but even by the neighbours. The poor boy *had* died in a strange house; he *had* been removed from the comforts of Ashmead—comforts how secured?—to the apothecary's residence, without a relation near him, and there he had died, and there his body lay: but then, the infection—true, but then the man who had been constantly in attendance upon *him*, came to *me*. How can I describe the ten thousand feelings by which I was assailed! And yet I do declare that the loss of the mere favour of Cuthbert in a worldly sense, perilous and destructive as it might be, was but a mole-hill in comparison with the mountain-like load of grief I experienced at the deprivation of his affection.

Well, the next day came: no letter by the post. Mrs. Sniggs sent up her compliments to beg to know whether we had heard from Mr. S.—Answer, not a word.—This was very strange; the funeral ought to take place as speedily as convenient; she wondered she had not got a letter, and so on. To me the silence was still more curious. However, as reason comes to one's aid even under the most trying circumstances, it at last struck me, and in that opinion Harriet agreed, that Sniggs would himself return in the course of the day, and so supersede the necessity of writing.

We were not wrong ; but we were not entirely right : we guessed the truth to a certain extent, but not the whole truth. At about six o'clock, just as I was sitting down in my wife's room to enjoy a *tête-à-tête* whiting and boiled chicken, a violent ringing at the gate announced an arrival ; dogs barked as usual, servants scuffled, and leaning over the balustrade, I heard Sniggs's voice directing his pale-faced flunky to take care of his bag and box, and carry them home. I heard other voices, I thought, and a rustling of petticoats crossing the hall to the dinner-room, which was dark and unoccupied, for I was settled in for a snug consolatory evening up-stairs. The rustling noise came forth again, and I heard my man say, " My master is up-stairs, Miss." I held my breath and listened ; it was all true. Sniggs waited in the hall, as a gentleman not of the family ought to do, but in less than two minutes I felt myself embraced and my cheeks wetted with the tears of Miss Kitty Falwasser and her sister Jane.

" This," said I, gently repelling Kate's excessive warmth of manner, " is a surprise."

" Yes," said Kate, sobbing so that you might have heard her to the wine-cellar door ; " we could—not—let—poor dear Tom go to the grave without—some one—who loved him being with—him ; and dear pappy is not well enough to come—and dear governess could not leave him—so—so so—we have come to go to his funeral."

Jane, less violent in her grief, but more sincere, pressed my hand and wept silently. I saw she felt for the loss of her brother, uncouth as he was and harsh to her ; for Jane was as different a creature from Kate as a discriminating observer of nature could well discover.

" I am glad to see you, dears," said I ; and I felt glad that the gallery round the hall was not well lighted, lest my looks should not have entirely corresponded with my words. " I will go and tell Harriet you are here ; your sudden appearance in her room might flurry her."

" How is she, dear thing?" said Kate.

" Oh, quite well," said I ; " and how is my brother in health?"

"What, pappy?" said Kate, who seemed scarcely to comprehend what I meant by the fraternal appellation. "He is pretty well in health, dear; but so shocked at the news that we thought he would have died; I think he would if Mr. Sniggs hadn't been there."

"He thought you would have come to him," said Jane; "and your not coming, I think, vexed him a good deal."

That's pleasant, thought I. However, it was necessary, now that the thing had taken its present turn, that Harriet should be apprised of the state of affairs, and I accordingly announced the arrival.

"I cannot look at Kate with patience," said Harriet. "I know why *she* has come. What a silly, silly man your poor dear brother is!"

"Never mind," said I; "we have no course but one to pursue, so make up your mind to be civil."

"Dear Gilbert," said Harriet, giving me one of her kindest looks, "whatever you wish me to do, I will do if I can; but the struggle is a difficult one, and not the less so from being so totally unexpected."

In five minutes the young ladies were kissing Harriet on the dexter and sinister sides of her face, weeping as they thought became them, and in half an hour more a refectory was prepared in the dining-room, at which, dragged away from my sanctum up-stairs, I presided, and Sniggs and the two mourning nymphs assisted.

What happened next day I reserve for the next portion of my notes.

CHAPTER XIII.

WITH all her inherent excellences, there is no question but that a woman—a pure, virtuous, right-minded woman, does feel a stronger and more implacable hatred for vice and levity of character in another woman, than, with a knowledge of her constitutional kindness of feeling, one would at first imagine possible. Now, as to Kate Falwas-

ser, I saw, of course, and felt, the impropriety of her conduct with regard to Kittington ; but it struck me to be *only* part and parcel of the system upon which she was ordinarily permitted to conduct herself, and a natural result of the course of education in which, under the able surveillance of Mrs. Brandyball, and latterly by the negative attentions of Cuthbert, she had been trained. But Harriet's feelings were of a so much stronger character, her indignation—I believe I may call it disgust—so much more powerful than anything I could bring myself to feel, that she was unable to endure the presence of the girl, or if she permitted her to stay in her room for half an hour, her look rested upon her handsome flushed cheek and her bright sparkling eyes with an expression which conveyed to me the idea that she positively loathed her.

“My dear Gilbert,” said Harriet, “it is quite impossible that you should permit this girl to stay here, and return to your brother without letting her understand that you are aware of her conduct with regard to Mr. Kittington. You owe it to Cuthbert, to *her*, and to yourself, to make her acquainted with the circumstance ; why are you to be a silent party to such an odious transaction.”

“I do not see why I should meddle in it,” said I. “If Kittington were a different sort of man from what he is, and there were any danger of matters coming to a serious conclusion, I should certainly consider it a duty to interfere ; but as nothing of the kind is to be apprehended, I really do not see why I am to excite the ill-feeling of the girl, especially as I have already assured myself that she would by some means or other contrive to associate Cuthbert in her cause against me, and I should fall a victim to my attempt at any such exposure.”

It was in vain I argued thus. Harriet talked of the principle of the affair—the propriety of using my knowledge of what was past, as a caution to the girl as to the future. Mrs. Wells had positively forbidden any intercourse between Kitty and Bessy Wells, who had been removed to a distance the morning after the arrival of the unwelcome visiter, under the plea of an old engagement, and the advantage of a change of air ; and Fanny kept the house, not only out of

respect to Tom's memory, but because the state of her engagement with the odious Lieutenant was growing particularly feverish.

Politics, I admit, occupied but a very small share of my attention just now, and although always, as a Tory born and bred, I delighted to hear of the successes almost weekly gained over our enemies by Lord Wellington, I felt so assured of the eventual triumph of my country over faction at home and foes abroad, that having no personal share, either civil or military, however humble it might have been, in the gigantic struggle going on, the fluctuations of my feelings were narrowed into the smallest possible circumference, and confined to the constantly vacillating question of whether and when Lieutenant Merman's recruiting service would really terminate, and his presence with his regiment be required. I heard faint rumours of an expectation that such an event was again anticipated, but I began to think that the subject was only agitated whenever any difference chanced to arise between the lovers. From what I could collect, it appeared that Fanny's eyes had been opened to the real character of her admirer, and that her filial affection seemed to preponderate in the scale during the discussion which was taking place as to the late outbreak of the gallant gentleman's temper.

Thus left to ourselves, Harriet was compelled to endure more of the society of the young ladies from Bath than would otherwise have been necessary; and while I was present, I confess I sat upon thorns, expecting every moment an explosion of Harriet's indignation, which I so earnestly desired to avoid.

"Pappy," said Kate, "wished us very much to see poor dear brother Tom before he was buried, but uncle seems to think it would be dangerous for us."

"So do I," said Harriet; "and if anything were to happen——"

"But then," said Kate, with an extra degree of animation, "I have been vaccinated on purpose, you know, dear. I should like it."

"I shouldn't," said Jane; "I should like to remember my poor dear brother as he *was* when alive; then we may

fancy him absent and away, and yet to return to us—but if we see him dead, the recollection of him so will always last.”

“I think,” said I, “you are right, Jane.”

“But then I could go without Jane,” said Kate; “Foxcroft could go with me, and——”

“No,” said I, “it would be the height of imprudence.”

“I could go alone, if that’s all,” said Kate; “I am not the least afraid, and I know the way.”

“It would not, I think, be considered delicate,” said Harriet, “for you to be seen in the streets of Blissford.”

“What,” said the young lady, “not if I were going to see my poor brother!”

“I think you had better not,” said I.

This evidently checked, but did not stop her, in the course which she was pursuing.

“Well,” continued she, “after the funeral, we may go and see Fanny Wells, although Bessy is gone?”

“Certainly,” said Harriet; “only I understood you were to return immediately after the funeral was over.”

“Why, so pappy said,” answered Kate; “but—I——”

Here she was again foiled in what, with Harriet’s predisposition to suspect, she considered the main object of her visit to Ashmead.

“Who are to go to the funeral, dear?” said Kate, addressing Harriet.

“Why,” said I, “you tell me that it is Cuthbert’s desire that both of you should attend: it is most unusual, and I should say unexpected, and——”

“Well, but, uncle,” said Jane, quietly, and certainly with much reason, “if we are not to go to see him before he is buried, nor go to the burying itself, we might as well have stayed at home.”

“Not at all, Jane,” said Kitty, sharply. “It shows our affection and regard to Tom even to be here at this time. I suppose you will go, uncle?”

“I propose doing so, certainly,” said I.

“And Mr. Sniggs will go,” said Kate.

“And Mr. Wells,” said I, “will perform the service.”

“Is there anybody else one could ask?” said Kate, af-

fecting to consider the subject. "Is there nobody we know—that——"

"Nobody that *you* know, Miss Falwasser," said Harriet, flushing crimson, "except your dancing-master—perhaps you would like *him* to be one of the mourners."

"What an idea!" said Jane.

"Well," said Kitty, in a tone which left us in doubt whether she felt or did not feel the latent meaning of my uncontrollably indignant wife's observation, "I see nothing so absurd in *that*. I'm sure he was as fond of Tom as anybody in this house ever was."

I gave Harriet a family look—a preventive glance—something between the entreating and monitory; she returned a significant toss of her head, and, to my infinite delight, said nothing.

"I am certain," said Kate, "that Mr. Kittington took more pains with brother Tom," and here she cried, "than anybody I ever saw take pains with anybody. Poor dear boy, he had not a turn for dancing; but still, I do think, if we may not go out, at least—I'm sure pappy would like it—I do think Mr. Kittington might follow his dear remains to the grave."

Here Kitty sobbed more vehemently, and here my dear Harriet seemed quite ready—if I may use the expression—to boil over with indignation. Kate's real object, cloaked in the affectation of sorrow, roused all her anger, and I hastened to interpose an observation that, however attentive Mr. Kittington might have been professionally to her brother, and however respectable in himself, he was not included in our circle of friends, whence alone attendants on such occasions were selected.

"Why, doctors go," said Kate; "and they are not friends, only attendants."

"True," said I; "but there is a slight difference between the services of the doctor and the dancing-master, as regards the deceased, towards the termination of his existence."

"Well, uncle," said Kate, pertinaciously adhering to her favourite proposition, "of course I have nothing to do with it. I dare say Mrs. Brandyball will write to me to-day, and

I shall hear to-morrow; for perhaps she may have some new directions to give about it."

Another glance of my wife's eye followed the announcement of this supposition, which renewed my trepidation lest she should be unable further to conceal her real feelings—for an attempt at hypocrisy with Harriet was really an effort: nor was I much displeased at seeing her make preparations for quitting the room which we had invaded. Thus encouraged, I suggested to the girls that the baby required his mother's care, and that we had better retire.

Whether I should have suspected what was passing in Kate's extremely shallow mind, if I had not been previously made aware of the circumstances which had occurred with regard to Kittington, I do not presume to guess; but having been so preadvised, every word, every look, every action of the girl seemed to me connected with the furtherance of the affair, and an anxiety to understand why her tender epistle yet remained unanswered. There was a restlessness about her—a constant going to the windows at the back of the house, which were not closed, and looking out upon the lawn and grounds as if hoping to see the object of her unquestionable affection, who, by no possible chance, could be there; then taking up a book and flitting over the leaves, stopping, perhaps, at a point the subject of which might in any degree be assimilated to what she considered her own circumstances; and then came a fit of absence, during which it appeared to me she was calculating upon the safest and surest means of obtaining an interview with her graceful preceptor. I was half inclined, during one of her paroxysms of abstraction, to dissipate the vision at once, and tell her all I knew of the matter. My old propensity for procrastination, however, triumphed, and I resolved to wait a day or two and see what would turn up.

My cogitations on this subject were interrupted by the arrival of Wells, who, under naturally excited feelings, came to open his heart to me and even seek advice about Fanny, which, knowing so much of his pro-matrimonial disposition as I did, I felt it would be difficult to give. The fact appeared to be, that the Lieutenant—totally opposed in politics, and, as he had recently discovered, in principle to

the Rector, and disappointed in his expectations as to the fortune Fanny was likely to bring him—had gradually retreated in proportion to Wells's advance; and had even used the gaiety and conviviality which Wells had pressed into the service to make his house agreeable to him, as weapons against his moral and clerical character. After the disappointment of his hopes with regard to Miss Maloney's acceptance of him, his return to Blissford appeared to have been the result of mingled vanity and revenge—he could prove to the thoughtless Millicent how much he was beloved by *her* whom he had sacrificed for her sake.

I had long before formed an opinion of all the parties brought before me in this discussion, which circumstances did not at all tend to change. Wells had so often avowed the doctrine of his addiction to early marriages, when I myself was an illustration, that I could easily imagine Merman to have only gone half the length of pressing a match upon Fanny. Of Fanny I knew enough to know that her affection for Merman might be considered negative, inasmuch as he was the only available dangler in the place; and that, moreover, having been, as was rumoured, a pretender to Harriet's hand, there would be something like a rural and domestic triumph in securing him; while with regard to Merman himself—hating him cordially, as I have already admitted—it seemed to me that he treated the poor girl as a mere child, whom he could twist round his finger and whistle off, or whistle on, as he pleased.

I therefore took leave to inquire of my reverend father-in-law what he thought of the state of the attachment of the parties to each other, and found by his replies, as I anticipated, that Fanny, although naturally leaning husband-wise, was, even in the present stage of the affair, perfectly willing to leave the case in her father's hands: in short, that she was ready to marry the Lieutenant, and subsequently become his dutiful and affectionate wife; or, if it were required of her, equally willing to let him join his regiment, or do anything else which might eternally divide them. In fact, I believe the whole history, as far as Fanny was concerned, had its origin in the desire not to be left far behind Harriet in the matrimonial race.

The counsel I gave to the Rector—and it did seem strange

that he should, so shortly after my marriage to his eldest daughter, come to *me* for an opinion upon the projected union of his second—was to wait for some further communication from the Radical recruiter. In fact, Merman had left the case at a stage in which it was impossible for my father-in-law farther to proceed, even if he knew where to address him. He agreed with me in this opinion, as indeed he could not fail to do; for the English soldier had taken what is called French leave; and although his servant remained at his lodgings in Blissford, we knew not whither he was gone, and were none of us likely to apply for information upon that most interesting point. The advice I gave was meritorious in two ways: I did not commit myself with either the lover or the parent; and, moreover, it was the only advice I could give. I acted, I admit, a little upon my old principle of waiting to see what would turn up; and as I knew something must turn up by the arrival of the next post, I felt proportionably interested in the general result, which eleven o'clock would infallibly produce; although I also admit that I certainly was not prepared for the accumulation of events which were, in point of fact, destined to overwhelm me long before that hour.

Kate, who, I confess, was an object of considerable interest to me—not perhaps of the interest which the generality of the world might call “interesting,” but because the having her in my house involved, as I felt, a similar sort of responsibility to that which a man incurs who chances to have deposited in his care a barrel of gunpowder, which an unlucky match might, at some unexpected moment, explode. She was constantly hovering about the hall or the garden in a lamentable state of worry. Jane conducted herself differently: she did nothing to occupy her mind—poor dear she had not much mind to occupy; and except, as I have before had occasion to remark, looking at prints in books or affecting to do some work equivalent to nothing, her occupations consisted chiefly in looking at the fire or playing with the spaniel's ears—so far that was safe; for although in after-life the still and silent lady is the one for mischief—at the relative ages of Kate and Jane, Kate was the impracticable one.

I was not so innocent of the world's ways as not to sus-

pect that Kate's restlessness was intimately connected with the real object of her affectionate visit to *Ashmead*. She seemed more anxious to communicate with her maid than seemed essentially necessary; and Harriet being still upstairs, there was nobody to detect the little fidgetings and whisperings in the gallery, and even in the hall itself, which were going on, except myself. I, however, calmed my apprehension of anything unfortunate happening, by a recollection of the highly honourable conduct of Kittington; and even went the length of saying to myself, as, indeed, I had previously thought—"Well, if she did marry Kittington—bating her extreme juvenility—she might do worse; and as for Cuthbert, she would be sure of his forgiveness if she took it into her head to marry his man Rumagee Bomajee, with his high-caste yellow streak down his nose. I believe really—and I hope I do not do her an injustice—but I do really believe that Harriet, when she found me disposed to palliate Kate's conduct about her *Dieu de la danse*, felt a great inclination to withdraw all her horrors and let her take her course. "Let her marry him," thought Harriet, "and then Cuthbert will see what a delightful creature his daughter-in-law is." The experiment would have failed; but Kittington was not so to be caught.

Well, Kate wandered, like Goosey Goosey Gander,

"Up stairs, down stairs, to my lady's chamber;"

whence, I believe, *my* lady would very readily have ordered Foxcroft to

"Take her by the left leg, and throw her down stairs."

but that the restlessness of her love-sick mind rendered the expulsion unnecessary.

Wells went home—we dined—Sniggs did not appear—and I took his absence as a sort of barometrical symptom of his knowledge of the state of my influence at Montpelier, and I was obliged to be as agreeable as nature or the circumstances of the case permitted me to be to my two young friends.

Scarcely, however, had the dessert been put down, and Kitty eaten three mouthfuls of Cuthbert's best preserved

ginger, when the sound of carriage-wheels, rapidly revolving, followed by the sudden jam-crash of a stop at the hall-door, made us all start. Jingle, whingle, whingle, bang went the bells—bark went the dogs—a rush of servants across the hall followed, and the usual sequel of clapping down carriage steps and mingled noises burst upon our ears.

‘What’s this?’ said I.

‘Pappy,’ said Kate.

“Mrs. Brandyball,” said Jane.

“The deuce!” said I.

Open flew the dining-room doors, and the servant announced “Mr. and Mrs. Nubley.”

“Gracious me!” said I, starting from my seat, and advancing to welcome my most unexpected visitors.

And sure enough in walked Mrs. Nubley, grinning and smirking, with her hand, as usual, over her mouth—Nubley following, having scarcely finished his directions to his servant as to what the post-boy was to be paid for a fourteen-mile stage.

“Lauk! Mr. Gurney,” screamed the lady, “here you are. Who these two young ladies are, I don’t know. How is Mrs. Gurney?”

“As well as can be expected,” said I.

“Lauk! you are such a man!” replied the lady. “He! he! he!”

“My dear friend,” said Nubley, in the most lugubrious tone, “you don’t, I suppose, know the reason of our coming here yet?—*How should he?*” added the worthy, in his soliloquising tone.

“I guess,” said I, fully impressed with the belief that Cuthbert had begged Nubley to attend the remains of the lamented Tom to the grave.

“Can’t guess,” replied Nubley.

“Sit down, Mrs. Nubley,” said I; “what can I offer you?—have you dined?”

“Dined!” said the lady; “lauk! Mr. G., you *are* so droll! Dined do you suppose my dear N. could have gone on without something to eat before this? He! he! he!”

“It’s a bad business that has brought me here,” drawled out Nubley.

"Yes," said I, "a sad business : but I am glad you are come."

"What, have you heard?" said the little man with the large head.

"Of course," replied I. "Here are two young ladies whom you ought to know."

"They arn't two of the Thompsons?" said Nubley.

"Of the what?" said I.

"Oh!" said Nubley, "then you *don't* know. I'll take a little weak warm brandy and water," continued he; "and, my love," addressing his wife, "hadn't you better go and see Mrs. Gurney, and take off your things? We are come to stay a little with you."

"I conclude," said I, "that my brother Cuthbert has written to you, and that you will remain here, at all events, a day or two after the funeral."

"Funeral!" said Nubley, with the deepest grief depicted on his little countenance.

"Funeral!" screamed Mrs. Nubley. "He! he! he What a droll man you are, Mr. G!"

"Are you not aware, then," said I, "that poor Cuthbert's favourite son-in-law is dead?—else why is the house shut up?—These are his sisters."

"Lauk!" said Mrs. Nubley.

"My!" said Mr. Nubley, "that ugly baby?"

And both the young ladies fell to sobbing incontinently.

"So it is," continued I; "and I concluded, when I saw you, that Cuthbert had apprised you of the fact, and wished you to attend the ceremony."

"Not a bit of it," said Nubley. "Dear me!—I am very sorry—nice boy, I suppose—poor little dears! Why, Mrs. Nubley, you knew their mother. Dear me!—are these—eh! la!—*how naked their shoulders are!*—eh!—what!—don't you, my dear——"

"Lauk, Mr. Nubley! to be sure I did," said Mrs. Nubley; "and are you two really the dear little things I remember in Calcutta? Bless me, how you are grown!"

"They do grow," said Nubley; and then, picking the stubble from his chin, muttered, "*umph! what a foolish remark!*—eh! I'm very sorry about the boy. What did he die of?"

"Small-pox," said I.

"Not in the house?" said Nubley.

"No," said Kate, "I wish he was, poor dear—for then we might take a last look at him."

"Poor dear!" said Nubley, "where have you put him to?"

"Oh," said I, "I will explain all the circumstances by-and-by. Perhaps, Mrs. Nubley, you would like to see Harriet. Kate, dear, ring, and send for Foxcroft, and go with Mrs. Nubley to your aunt's room—go, Jane, love."

And by all these exertions I put the train in motion, and found myself left alone with my present absent friend, whose peculiarities I have already so particularly noted down in the first portion of my papers, as to render any further remark wholly unnecessary.

"What, then," said Nubley, when the *ladies* had retired, "brother Cuthbert isn't here?"

"No," said I, "he is gone to live for the present at Bath."

"Do these young Falwassers stay here?"

"No," said I, "they are here merely for the funeral of the brother."

"What, then," said Nubley, "Cuthbert has given up the house to you altogether?"

"I hope," said I, "he will soon return," rather embarrassed by the question.

Nubley, as was his custom, fixed his eyes full upon my face, and, as usual, stubbling his chin, muttered, "*Not he—never, as long as you live.*" And these girls," continued he, avowedly addressing me, "are two of the little children I remember being sent home by poor Falwasser. Good man, Falwasser—not wise—henpecked—talked to death by his wife—though he *was* a lawyer—eh! And when do they bury the boy?"

"The day is not fixed," said I, "nor will it be till to-morrow. You will attend the funeral?"

"Why, that depends," said Nubley; "not being asked, I can't say."

"Oh," said I, "I am too proud to ask you."

"You!" said Nubley; "ah! that's all very well—but—

however, we'll see—Cuthbert hasn't you know; and so—but never mind—what I have come here about—never thought of a funeral!—Captain Thompson, or whatever his name is, who has taken Chittagong Lodge—with his nieces—and they all have cousins—I never heard of such a number of cousins; I am told they are playing Old Nick with the place—and the dilapidations are great, and rent not certain, eh!—let furnished—can't distrain my own chairs and tables;—and so, not knowing of all this, we came down to beg a night or two's houseroom—never thought of the death—*wouldn't have come if I had heard of it.*”

That there was room for their accommodation in the house at Ashmead could not be denied; but it did really seem the most vexatious addition to all my other calamities, that this most eccentric couple of people, in their separate ways, should be quartered upon me just at a moment when I was almost overwhelmed with difficulties of even greater importance.

I smiled a new welcome, which was scarcely ended, when Mrs. Nubley and the young ladies returned to us, having been, as it was evident to me, ejected with very little ceremony, from what, by courtesy, was still called Harriet's “sick-room.”

“Lauk! Mr. Gurney,” screamed Mrs. Nubley. “what a beautiful baby!—quite a 'Ercles!—I never *did* see. He! he! he!—you are such a man! and dear Mrs. G., how well she is looking! I have asked all about the family—'specially after Fanny, and dear little Lizzy—Bessy, you call her.”

“*I* do,” said Kate; “I'm very fond of Bessy, and so is she of *me*.”

“Do you recollect much of your mother, my little dear?” said Nubley.

“Sir?” said Kate, colouring crimson all over her neck and shoulders at being addressed in the paternal manner which Mr. Nubley chose to adopt.

“You don't recollect much of your poor mother?”

“No! I should think not!” said Kate, tossing her head aside. “It is more than ten years since I was in India.”

“Dear me,” said Nubley, “is that possible?—eh! Mrs. N.,

"years? Well, to be sure!—eh! And you have been at school all this time, my little love?"

"I've left school now," said Kate, looking stiletto at her examiner.

"Only for a time, Kate," said I.

"For ever, I hope," said Kate. "The minute Mrs. Grandyball retires, I am never to be pestered with school any more. Why should I?"

"And what is *your* name, my pretty child?" continued Nubley, addressing the other Falwasser.

"Jane, sir," said she.

"Lauk!" said Mrs. Nubley. "you were called after your aunt—I remember now. And are you both very clever?—I suppose so. Your mamma was a charming woman—great friend of mine—many a pleasant day we have passed together. But it's no use talking of *that* now. He! he! he!"

To this sort of conversation—if conversation it might be called—I was destined to listen till tea and coffee were produced; during the exhibition of which (Kate doing the honours) Mrs. Nubley detailed all their apprehensions as to the mischief that was going on at Chittagong, and their anxiety to know its extent, and the means of obtaining legal redress;—the by-play of the scene being kept up most assiduously by the young ladies of the party, who whenever an opportunity occurred, indulged themselves in making the most grotesque faces at each other, in the highest degree expressive of disgust and contempt which the proceedings of the newly-arrived guests had excited in their youthful bosoms. Seeing all this in progress, I felt it imperative on me not to hand over the antiques to the good-breeding of the moderns, by leaving the room, which I was most anxious to do, in order to communicate with Harriet upon the arrangements necessary in consequence of the arrival of our unexpected guests.

It required a good deal of manœuvring to manage this matter, and I at last resolved to detach Mrs. Nubley, or rather carry her off with me to Harriet's room, to get her out of harm's way—not so much caring about Nubley, who, in his quaint, odd manner, might make a tolerable fight

against the pertness of my young connexions ; but there I was defeated, for the moment I suggested the lady's visit to my wife's room, both the dear girls volunteered to accompany us, and persisted in their intention, in spite of my remonstrances against their leaving Mr. Nubley by himself.

It is not worth while putting down in detail the various little schemes and stratagemis by which the evening, in a house where mirth and amusement were interdicted, was consumed ; but it is important to observe that a conversation which I had with Nubley, after the ladies had retired for the night, gave a new turn to my thoughts, and even to my hopes with regard to Cuthbert. Of the manners, style, and tone of behaviour adopted by the young Falwassers, the old Indian, even in the short space of time which had passed since his arrival at Ashmead, had formed a tolerably decided opinion, and spoke of them in terms not less strong and abrupt than those which he was ordinarily in the habit of using upon less delicate topics. I saw he was vexed and mortified ; and from a few of those involuntary mutterings in which he developed his secret thoughts, as well as from his avowed observations on the subject, vexed and mortified not more on his own account, or that of his wife, than upon mine—seeing that he had gathered, even in four hours, sufficient knowledge of the real state of the case, as to be convinced that there was an influence at work over Cuthbert which was superior to mine, even if it had not already superseded it entirely.

The moment his remarks took the character of suspicion of this melancholy truth, and that I found him lamenting that so strange a perversion of all that might have been expected was likely to take place, it occurred to me that if I found my worst apprehensions realised, and that the system of neglect and insult—I say insult, as far as Harriet is concerned—was continued, my only chance of retrieving Cuthbert, of opening his eyes to the delusion which Mrs. Brandyball was practising, and of re-establishing my natural claims to his affection, would be by the intercession of his present friend and former partner in business, Nubley. It is the advantage of a sanguine disposition to seize upon a new idea with a sort of ecstasy, and to be full of gratitude

for the apparent chance which has given it birth, and then to call to mind the combination of circumstances in which it has originated, in order to prove that it must be fortunate. If Nubley's tenants at Chittagong had been respectable people, he would not have come to Ashmead, which at first I considered an annoyance. If he had not come to Ashmead during this particular week, he would not have seen the two young ladies, who involuntarily and unconsciously betrayed to him the real state of the case; it was not luck—it was not good fortune—but Providence that had permitted this very unexpected meeting; and so earnestly did I feel the importance of the coincidence, that before Harriet's eyes were closed for the night, she was apprised of my hopes and my determination.

It was well I *had* conjured up such hopes—for even if they eventually proved groundless, they served to sustain me against a new attack. Morning came—breakfast came—post-hour came—no letter for *me*, except one from Messrs. Rumble and Stump, coachmakers of Long Acre, inclosing their bill of 428*l.* 16*s.* 6*d.*, for the chariot with which I certainly understood Cuthbert had presented me, and for repairs done to the phaeton, which I imagined he had in the kindest manner possible given Harriet. This, unexpected as it was, appeared by no means so extraordinary as the absence of any communication from Cuthbert or his familiar—not a line to me: this might be nothing—but not a line to Kitty—that *was* something, and I could not satisfy myself of the reality of the circumstance, without renewing my inquiries as to the receipt of the letter-bag, and whether it had been opened, before it was brought to me, as was sometimes the case, when the young ladies were what they then called “at home;” but no—the key had not been removed from the place where I always kept it, and the servants were perfectly sure nobody had touched the bag.

When once suspicion is excited, however gently, confidence ends; and I confess it was rather by the evident mystification of the girls themselves at breakfast, at not having heard from Cuthbert, or the busy B., that I was satisfied that no tricks had been played with the letters, than by any other part of the history.

It was not long, however, before I was enlightened. I had observed, since Sniggs's return from Montpelier, a sort of shyness—a disinclination to be so much about Ashmead; indeed, I minuted it down at the time, and drew my conclusions therefrom. Every hour of his absence, and his unwillingness to come to a house out of which it was previously difficult to keep him, satisfied me that my first suspicions were well grounded, and that he felt his ultimate success in his attacks upon Cuthbert's pocket very much depended on an ostensible abandonment of me and mine; nor did I doubt that his latent dislike for Mrs. Wells—for a share of which I of course came in, because at her suggestion, or rather command, I had invited Dr. Downey (whom he hated, because he envied) to supplant him when Harriet was confined—gave a very considerable additional weight to my poor brother's injunctions to him, which, as I felt it, delivered over to him the entire charge and arrangement of every proceeding consequent upon Tom's death.

The arrival shortly after breakfast, not of Sniggs, but of the putty-faced urchin in the glazed hat, with a letter directed not to me, but to Kitty, entirely justified my suspicions. The packet was delivered to the young lady, with an announcement that Mr. Sniggs's servant waited.

Kitty upon receiving the letter begged to retire, and suiting the action to the word, quitted the breakfast-room, followed by Jane. The interesting young creatures remained absent about half an hour, when Jane returned, bringing me the following letter, addressed by Sniggs—by Sniggs, recollect—to Kate:—

“My dear Miss Falwasser—I have received the inclosed for you from Mrs. Brandyball, who tells me she writes in the name of dear Mr. Cuthbert—who is too much exhausted to write to you himself. I send you also a letter which I have received, and which you will be good enough to show to Mr. Gilbert Gurney. Make my compliments to him, and say, that, knowing his dread of infection, I consider it, under existing circumstances, more prudent to abstain from visiting Ashmead for the present. I shall be glad to hear from you and your sister as to your wishes with regard to the contents of Mrs.

Brandyball's letter, of which, as you will see by the letter, which you will be good enough to show your uncle, I am in some degree aware. Pray present my best respects to Mr Gilbert Gurney and his lady, and believe me, dear Miss Falwasser,

“ Your obedient servant,

“ S. SNIGGS.”

“ Well,” said I, “ and where is this letter which I am to be favoured with a sight of?”

“ Here, dear,” said Jane.

“ *Montpelier, Feb. —, —.*

“ Dear Mr. Sniggs—The devoted attentions which you were kind enough to bestow upon the dear departed have so entirely gained—I will not only say, the esteem—but the affection of Mr. Gurney, that he would again and again have expressed his gratitude in writing had he the power to exert himself sufficiently: as it is, I am deputed to perform the pleasing office of conveying to you his renewed expressions of esteem.

“ Mr. Gilbert Gurney's peculiar situation with regard to his new-born child, and the dread which his wife entertains of infection, induce Mr. Gurney to address himself direct to you as to the necessary instructions for the interment of the dear boy, instead of creating any alarm in their family. He wishes the funeral to be in the highest degree respectable, but free from ostentatious display, and leaves it entirely to you to decide whether the dear children should attend it; the main point being, the question whether any danger to themselves is likely to impend. This will however all rest with you, to whom he entirely confides the whole arrangement.

“ I have written at length to Miss Falwasser, but as you are considered responsible by Mr. Gurney for the conduct of this business, and as he is so very strongly impressed with your kindness and activity in hastening hither from all your professional avocations to break the melancholy news of the demise of the poor child, who (unavoidably, I admit,) was an exile from the house in which, of all others in the world, he ought to have been a permanent inmate, he relies wholly

upon you to see that his injunctions are strictly complied with.

“I should feel greatly obliged to you if you would persuade Mrs. Sniggs to do any little kind office to the dear girls with respect to whatever article of mourning which they may require. Mrs. Gilbert Gurney is not yet, of course, sufficiently recovered to take much trouble upon such points, and although I believe the young ladies are provided with all the essentials for a change of habit, still if you would mention this request of Mr. Gurney’s, he would feel obliged to you, for they are yet young, and although they have suffered a double privation in the loss of both parents, their losses occurred at a period of their lives when their minds had not imbibed sufficient knowledge of mundane affairs to be capable recipients of information essential upon such melancholy occasions.

“I have another word to say: Mr. Gurney, whose soul breathes the spirit of gentleness, and whose heart is all affection, has devoted the last few hours to the composition of a few lines by way of inscription on the tablet of which you so feelingly spoke when you were here—and what a consolation was your visit in the absence of nearer ties! Mr. Gurney incloses the inscription due to the merits of the poor lost angel, which I consider beyond all praise. If Mr. Gilbert Gurney could spare time to look at this tribute, I think his brother would be gratified, for he sometimes speaks of him with kindly feeling, which I hope he will always cherish. The artist you mentioned when you were here, would, I have no doubt, adequately execute any little memorial suitable to the circumstances. I refer you to Miss Falwasser for any further particulars, to whom I have communicated all that can be necessary to guide your conduct. With the best regards of Mr. Gurney, in which I sincerely join,

“Believe me, dear Mr. Sniggs, yours truly,

“I. BRANDYBALL.”

I could hardly contain, not so much my indignation, as my astonishment at the contents of this most extraordinary letter; and it was with great difficulty I attempted to read the enclosure, containing the proposed inscription to

the memory of poor Tom. Read it I did, and I admit it only added one more to the many examples of caricatured description which abound in all the cathedrals, churches, chapels, convents, conventicles, crypts, and cemeteries in the world. Thus it ran, and although Cuthbert was permitted to assume the credit of the composition, the beautifully figurative style of Mrs. Brandyball would, in spite of all her efforts to subdue it, burst out in its most unquestionable form:—

Sacred to the memory of
 Master THOMAS GEORGE FALWASSER,
 Who died on the — of —, 18—,
 Aged fourteen years and six weeks.

To a lovely person and captivating manners
 He united a capacious mind,
 Admirably well stored, considering the
 Tenderness of his years, with knowledge
 And accomplishments.
 His disposition was amiable and kind,
 His feelings were just and honourable,
 His thoughts pure and guileless,
 His affections devoted and undivided
 For those
 Who, bending under the weight of his
 Irreparable loss,
 Have to testify their never-fading love
 And remembrance of him,
 Placed this humble but genuine testimony
 To his worth and virtues,
 Which seemed to be of a character too celestial
 For this grovelling sphere.

This inscription was more than I could digest; and yet, as I have already said, the system is a common one, and the flattering falsehoods which grace the marble shrines of those whose merits while alive were not discernible, at least to the naked eye, are little worse than this tribute to Tom Falwasser. At *his* age, poor fellow, I could not say, as the officer did who paraphrased Purcell's epitaph in Westminster Abbey, in favour of a general whose remains lay undistinguished by a line of remark, "He is gone to that place where his own fireworks alone can be exceeded;" but I could not read of his amiable disposition, lovely person, and

captivating manners, without thinking of the squibs and crackers, or reverting to the last two bottles of cherry brandy.

I saw at once that the effusion was the result of the first shock, and that a few weeks would so far assuage the grief of Cuthbert for his loss, as to permit me, if it were left to my discretion, to moderate, in some degree, the extraordinary eulogy which it contained. It is wonderful how often this sort of softening down occurs in the world.

"Well," said I to Jane, after having read this curious communication, addressed to a person who had so unexpectedly been "made up" into an intimate friend, "and what does Kate's letter say?"

"Oh," said Jane, "she won't tell *me*: all she says is, that she wishes to see Mr. Sniggs directly; and wishes to know whether you think she might not go to his house in the pony phaeton—with the head up—with me, and take our maid with us, and then we might see poor Tom; and besides, she wants to buy some crape and some love—"

"Some what?" said I.

"Some mourning-stuff," said Jane; "and as aunt is not well enough to trouble herself, Kitty thinks we might go."

"*I* think not," said I; "nothing could be more indelicate."

"Very well, uncle," said Jane, who is really well-dispositioned, and whom I knew had only been put forward by her elder sister; "then I'll go and tell Kate so. Only she has got a great deal about it all in *her* letter."

Away went Jane. Nubley had heard what passed. He turned his eyes upwards and moaned, and looked out of the window, and played the devil's tattoo upon the glass. I liked the symptoms. I had not breathed a syllable of my intention of making him a mediator between Cuthbert and myself; therefore every aggravating circumstance that could occur illustrative of the inevitable division between us while he was with me, was delightful to *me*. Mrs. Nubley had gone to Harriet, who was yet ignorant of the "cut direct" which Cuthbert had given us by delivering the *carte blanche* for the arrangements into the hands of the Gorgon who commanded him.

Accredited as Kate evidently was, I honestly admit I

waited her approach with trepidation. It really *was* too bad: every act of my life, since Cuthbert's return and domiciliation amongst us had been invariably misrepresented, and the last measure which I had adopted, not only upon my own feeling, but with the entire support of a man of the world like Wells,—I mean *that* of sending Sniggs to Montpelier instead of going myself, had produced the least looked for effect: for it had not only increased his popularity with Cuthbert, but had estranged him from myself, and made me contemptible in the eyes of the man whom I had raised into notice, and even practice, by inviting him to attend Cuthbert at Ashmead.

I waited for Kate—she did not come. Nubley seemed extremely fidgetty—so was I; and in the midst of this most embarrassing lull, as the sailors call it, a loud ringing at the hall-door announced an arrival; and who should present himself, but the reverend Rector, my worthy father-in-law, whose flushed cheeks and almost quivering lip proclaimed him in a sort of agony of excitement—the cause of which I was not very far from anticipating.

He entered the room, and hastily acknowledging Nubley, as if he had expected to find him there—which he certainly could not have done—caught my hand.

"Give me ten minutes' conversation," said Wells; "you never heard—I have got a letter—insolent puppy—"

"Come into the library," said I; "to be sure—yes—I can guess."

"You never heard," said Wells.

"It doesn't surprise me," replied I.

"I want to read you part of Mrs. Brandyball's letter," said Kate, coming into the room at the same moment—

"Ah, Mr. Wells, how do you do?"

"Very ill, my dear," said Wells.

"Very well," said I, "I'll hear it in ten minutes, Kitty."

"May Jane and I go to Mr. Sniggs's?" asked Kate.

"Ask Harriet," replied I, glad to shift some of the responsibility of what was going on upon some other shoulders.

"Oh," said Kate, "*she* won't let us go."

She! thought I.

"Come," said Wells, "there's not a moment to be lost."

"I'll be back directly," said I to the girls.

"Mr. Nubley," said I, "do me the favour to entertain the young ladies for five minutes, till I come back."

"O the old Gig!" said Kate: and away she and her sister ran, laughing through their grief in the most obstreperous manner.

Another loud ring preceded the announcement of Mrs. Sniggs, who never before had set foot in the house except on a Twelfth Night, when she brought two dancing-girls who had no particular relations, but who, presuming upon Cuthbert's message, now made her appearance to consult with the Miss Falwassers about mourning. A talk followed, the prelude to which I could not stop to hear; but hurrying to the library with my much-excited father-in-law, I left the girls and the apothecary's wife in earnest conversation in the hall, and saw Nubley creep out of the glass-door at the back of the house to take his accustomed after-breakfast stroll a walk well sheltered by evergreens.

CHAPTER XIV

"You cannot imagine anything like this man's conduct," said Wells, trembling with quite as much rage as became a clergyman—"positively throws us over—of course he knows I cannot fight him, at least with decency, and so insults me."

At the moment, agitated as I was, I could not help thinking of a joke of Wells's own, in which he once suggested, in the case of a quarrel between two bishops, the propriety of their going out to settle their difference with a brace of *minor canons*.

"What shall I do with him?" said Wells.

I certainly did not feel at the moment particularly competent to give advice, but I looked all attention to the appeal.

"Read his letter, Gilbert," continued my father-in-law, handing it to me; "that's all—only just read it."

I knew my fate, and bowed submission, although I wanted no "documents" to confirm me in the opinion I had formed of the above Lieutenant.

" *Diansgrove*, — 18

"DEAR SIR,—I do assure you that no circumstances of my life ever gave me so much pain as those which in my mind render it necessary that I should address this letter to you—I am quite sure that you will receive it in the spirit in which it is written, and that you will, before you have reached its termination, feel equally satisfied with myself that the course I have adopted is that which is best calculated to ensure the happiness of two persons in whom (in different degrees, I admit,) you are, under all the circumstances, deeply interested.

"The long intercourse which I have had the gratification of enjoying with your amiable family, has given me the best opportunity of forming the highly favourable opinion of Miss Wells which I have ventured to express to you, and which I believe was not ill-received by the young lady herself; in fact I saw as I have repeatedly avowed, nothing but a bright prospect of happiness with her in that union which you were pleased to sanction.

"You will recollect, dear sir, that at the time when my aunt, Miss Pennefather, from whose house I now write, made a proposition to me with regard to a fortune to become mine, saddled with a condition which would inevitably destroy the hopes of comfort which I then anticipated with Miss Fanny, I made such a communication as induced you to leave me open to choose between the object of my affections and the mere worldly advantage to be derived from its abandonment. My conduct proved the strength of my attachment to your daughter, and I returned hastily and happily to the bosom of your family, in which I passed so many delightful hours; and I honestly confess that the reception I met with from Miss Fanny was most gratifying to me; although I must admit that I did not think the conduct of Mrs. Wells afforded any striking proof of her sympathy with the feelings of her daughter; indeed, on the contrary, it appeared to me that her manner towards me was considerably changed, and her bearing was such as to convey an impression to my mind

that she imagined I ought not to have listened to my aunt's suggestion in the first instance.

"Now, dear sir, I should perhaps here mention that my aunt, Miss Laura Pennefather, uniformly acts upon the highest principle, and that although her affection for *me* induced her to draw my attention to what she calls 'worldly interests,' (however highly she herself soars above such considerations), the moment she found that it was impossible for me to overcome the affection which I confessed to her I felt for your amiable daughter, she made the arrangement which I subsequently communicated to you, by which she divided between myself and her *protégée* the sum which, independently of what she may otherwise leave, she had intended to bequeath entire for *her* fortune if she had married *me*.

"Having conscientiously and upon principle fairly made the sacrifice—if sacrifice that can be considered which merely surrenders the world's goods, keeping the heart's feelings still secure, I returned to your house; and as I hoped, and I need not say wished, all seemed to go on well. I repeat, that Mrs. Wells's manner was not altogether agreeable: however, when a man really loves—and I appeal to you as one who *has* loved in the sense of the words in which I now use them—there are few obstacles which are invincible; and I resolved to bear up against whatever I felt irksome, and look forward to the consummation of my happiness in my approaching union with Miss Wells:—but I am sure you will forgive me,—circumstances did occur, to which I have already alluded in conversation with Miss Wells, which gave me much pain.

"You have, during our acquaintance, and so indeed has your son-in-law, Mr. Gilbert Gurney, taken many opportunities of alluding in terms of a not very particularly qualified character to my political feelings and principles; to this there can be no possible objection, but it shows the *animus*, as it is called: and when, in addition to the intolerant political spirit which seems to govern your clerical conduct, I find in you and your family a disposition to ridicule what I consider the true course of religious feeling, and hear you indulging in a jocose manner upon topics which I have been taught never to touch without reverence, I begin to think

that a connexion between us would lead to no favourable results.

"My aunt, Miss, or as she now calls herself, Mrs. Penefather, is one of those rigidly correct persons whose feelings are outraged by the slightest deviation from the strict path of piety and rectitude; she has questioned me constantly and deeply on the subject of Miss Wells's religious principles, and I have always met her searching inquiries by the unanswerable—as I thought—answer, that she was the daughter of a clergyman of the Church of England. This to a certain extent satisfied her scruples, nice and delicate upon such points, as she is; but I think it only candid and right to say, that the conversation which took place with regard to the bishop—and my aunt has always a suspicion of the episcopal character—who examined a candidate for orders in an antichristian author, has so completely alienated my mind from the respect due to the sacred profession which you pursue, as to render it impossible, consistently with my expectations of happiness, to fulfil the engagements with Miss Wells, which, at least, by implication, I have entered into.

"It may be as well, dear sir, to say that so far as our secular feelings are concerned, I have nothing to offer but unqualified praise of your abilities, and thanks for your unbounded hospitality; but taking higher views, for which I am sure you cannot blame me, I must beg leave, however painful the task, to decline all further communication with your family, with reference to any more particular connexion. I do not imagine it likely that you will be inclined to carry this matter further; but should you do so, I shall be happy to furnish you with the name of my attorney—for myself, I have been relieved from the recruiting service in England, and shall join my regiment in Spain in a few weeks. All I hope is, that you will favour me with a few lines to tell me that you are not offended with the course I have taken; and as for Miss Wells, I am sure she is too implicit a follower of her mother's advice, and participates too much in her opinions, to regret the loss of,

"Dear sir, your faithful servant,

"PHILIP MERMAN."

"Well, Gilbert," said Wells, when I had finished reading,—"now what do you think of that?"

The question was a very startling one. The letter was a most unprincipled attack, upon a ground perfectly untenable by the writer; and when this natural conclusion is come to, there must be added the fact, that, as far as I was concerned, I was delighted at the break off. My answer, if it were to be given in a purely independent spirit, was a puzzler.

"Why," said I, somewhat hesitatingly,—“it seems to me that this gentleman has some underground reason for backing out of what must be considered a settled engagement. He even hints at law—now that sort of husband-hunting would not be good for dear Fanny's reputation or respectability; and as for his morality or piety—the excuse is mere trash. The question in my mind is, how much Fanny will care for the loss of him, and what injury his defection will do her.”

"None," said Wells,—“no injury whatever; you don't suppose that I care one farthing for what the world of Blissford say—besides, they are not aware of the varying state of his affections—of his going off and coming on—we are not here like kings and queens, whose every-day transactions are recorded in the newspapers. He is gone—let him go—what say you, Gilbert?”

"I should say 'Ditto to Mr. Burke,'" said I. "But again I ask, what will our Fanny say?"

"Why, 'Ditto to Mr. Gurney,' as I think," said Wells. "She is a straightforward, plain-sailing girl—naturally enough wishing to be married—you know my principles upon that point.—Well, and as long as everything went smooth, and they were attached to each other, and all that—why, well and good; but I believe she is very much attached to *me*; and I believe that the mode in which he prepared for his retreat by assailing my character, has very much curdled the kindness she had all along felt towards him. The plea is ridiculous; the pretence absurd. Rely upon it, Gilbert, you are right in thinking that there is more in this affair than the letter discloses or even admits. My opinion is, that as I mean of course to take no further steps to recall him, or force him into a marriage, for the

best plan will be to leave his letter unanswered—to take no notice of him—but permit him to enjoy his liberty and campaigning without interruption.”

“In this scheme,” said I, “I perfectly agree;” and so I did, upon various grounds. I certainly thought the notion of suing such a man for a breach of promise of marriage, even if it could be brought home to him, would be—always taking Wells’s principles upon matrimony into the question—ruinous to my poor sister-in-law. And as to any attempt at recalling him by fair means, I held that it would be beyond measure derogatory to the whole family, not to speak of its personal and particular annoyance to myself.

“Well then,” said Wells, “shall I keep my counsel, and say nothing about the letter, but treat the fellow with silent contempt?”

“That,” said I, “is the plan: he has behaved outrageously; and if you had a son, I suppose they would be opposite to each other twelve paces apart to-morrow morning; but as it is, let the thing drop—let him hear no more. Of course you will talk it over with Fanny, and unless Sniggs ferrets out the truth, the whole affair will die away in a week.”

“I’ll take your advice,” said Wells; “never show your teeth, when you can’t—or at least don’t, mean to bite. So let it be agreed—mum. I shall talk to Fan—but that is all—*she* won’t break her heart, *I* know.”

“But,” said I, thinking of my own perplexities, “what do you think of Mrs. Sniggs’s coming here as deputy Brandyball, superseding all our authority, and proposing to take the girls out shopping?”

“Impossible!” said Wells.

“So, from what I can gather, is the fact,” said I. “And will you believe it?—you, who so well remember poor Tom. and his manner, and his face, and his nose, and all—they have sent me an inscription and epitaph for his tomb—will you look at it?—see—just read it—I assure you it is a curiosity.”

Saying which, I produced the effusion which I had thrust into my pocket.

Wells looked over the inscription—the eulogistic in-

scription to the memory of the lost, and laughed as loudly as any man professing his principles could be expected to laugh who had just lost a son-in-law.

"What d'y'e think of *that*?" said I.

"Put this by for the present," said Wells, doubling up the paper; "these things are for days to come. What's doing now? that's the point."

"Why," said I, "I am about the last person to ask: I declare myself wholly in the dark. We have got a new character on the stage now that Mrs. Sniggs has made her appearance."

"Where is Sniggs himself?" asked Wells.

"I have not seen him since the day before yesterday," said I; "he avoids me: he has smelt out where the influence in this family lies; and now, upon the authority of a letter from Bath, deposes his lady to supersede my wife in her arrangements with the young ladies about mourning."

"It is odd," said Wells.

"It is disgusting," said I.

"Well," said my father-in-law, "if you agree with me, that silent contempt is the line with regard to the Lieutenant, we need discuss that matter no further. Say nothing to poor dear Harriet in the midst of her other vexations; I will have my talk over with Fan at home, and regulate my conduct according to the symptoms she discovers; but under no circumstances will I do anything further without consulting you."

"You flatter me," said I: "but is the Lieutenant gone, as they say, for good?"

"Why," said Wells, "I am not one of those who go hunting about, and ferreting out news; but I hear that he is gone 'altogether and intirely out of this,' as my friend Colonel O'Flynn says, and who tells me that he has quitted the place in his military capacity. Whether this be so or not, I do not pretend to say; but I do not think it likely he will show himself here again in a civil character."

"I should think not," said I. "Of one thing assure yourself, I am firm in my approval of the course you have now adopted; so let us go to the breakfast-room, and see what is going on there."

And away we went; Wells very much calmed by finding that I entertained a similar opinion to his own; and when we arrived in the hall, we found Jane Falwasser lingering—I dare say she had been listening—about the door of the library, evidently with the view of making some communication to me.

“Well, Jane,” said I, “where is Kate? I suppose she will show me her letter, or at least tell me what my brother desires her to do.”

“Kate is gone, uncle,” said Jane.

“Gone where?” asked I.

“Gone with Mrs. Sniggs,” replied Jane; “she told her that she was to go with her to buy anything she wanted at Twig and Dilberry’s, and afterwards she is going home with Mrs. Sniggs, to see her poor brother Tom in his coffin.”

“Indeed,” said I; “does Mrs. Gurney know of this?”

“No, uncle,” said Jane; “pappy, or at least Mrs. Brandyball, had written to Mr. Sniggs to desire his wife to do whatever she chose—he is so delighted with Mr. Sniggs’ coming to him, and all that; and so Kate said she did not care who said she was not to go, if pappy said she *was* to go,—and so she is gone.”

“And why did you not go?” said I.

“Because I thought Aunt Harriet did not wish it, said Jane; “if I could have spoken to you and asked your leave, I would have gone, because I know Kate will be cross with me for not going with her; but I could not, Uncle Gilbert—I could not, even then, have borne to see my poor brother: I would have gone to the house, but not into the room.”

“Jane,” said I, “you are a kind-hearted girl, and a good girl: and I thank you for your consideration of us while under our roof: but still more do I praise you for your feeling with regard to your poor brother: and when,” continued I, “have they fixed for the funeral?”

“The day after to-morrow,” said Jane; “and Kate tells me that there is to be music in the church, and a dirge played; and the organist is away, and so Kate has got Mrs. Sniggs to ask Mr. Kittington to play the dirge be-

cause there is nobody else in Blissford who can play the organ, and *he* can."

"Umph!" said Wells; "a dancing-master do a dirge in *my* church! But, my dear child, I have heard nothing of all this: somewhat of these arrangements depends upon me."

"I don't know," said Jane; "all I tell you is in Kate's letter."

Wells and I exchanged glances; but we spake not. I confess I looked at Jane with feelings far different from those which I had previously entertained towards her. It was evident from the first, that although to a certain extent under her influence, and spoiled by an association with her, she was of a very superior order of girl to Kate. She felt the difficulty and delicacy, or rather indelicacy, of leaving Ashmead contrary to the wish of the mistress of the house, and without some qualifying consent of its master, who was so nearly connected with her. Not so Kate. Off she went, delighted at an excuse to get out, and convinced that, in order to smoothe away the difficulty of the dirge, she could prevail upon the unconscious Mrs. Sniggs to call upon Mr. Kittington to make the necessary arrangements for his performance of that much-desired, although not usual piece of solemnity.

The thing that annoyed me most, and it rankled—and what a fool I must have been to let it rankle!—was the absence of Sniggs himself. His lady wife muttered something about his patients—absurdity; when four days before, he was satisfied to leave all he had—and such an all!—to the care of a friend or an assistant. No; it was too clear: he was aware of the exact state of my power and importance, and (as I before thought) of the probability that the days of my residence at Ashmead were numbered. He was to come up in the afternoon—so his message said; but how different was this formally-announced visit from the constant hop-aboutishness, as Mrs. Nubley called it, with which he previously paged our heels, and anticipated our slightest wishes.

"Well," said I, "there is one consolation; the fault is not my own."

"Now," said Wells, "I will go home, and having fortified myself with your support, tell Fanny the course I think we ought to pursue. She loves her father, Gilbert, as I hope and believe all my girls do; and the Lieutenant could not have taken a surer mode of curing her of her affection for *him*, than by unjustly and coarsely impugning *my* character or conduct. I will go to her directly, and most probably we shall come up here in the course of the afternoon. The walk 'will do her good; besides, I will not suffer her to hide away from the eyes of the two-and-twenty' public of Blissford; she has done nothing unbecoming or improper, and she shall not seem cast down by the misbehaviour of this extremely ill-conducted man."

And away went Wells, in exactly that sort of humour in which I wished to see him, resolved to stand up manfully against a most unjustifiable proceeding, conscious that nobody could, or would, or, if they would, should misrepresent the conduct of either himself or his family.

When he left me, I asked Jane if she would like to come up with me to her aunt's room. I was anxious to tell Harriet how deeply I felt the difference between her conduct and that of her sister, and to tell her so in the girl's presence. While Kate was with her and exercised her control over her, Jane giggled, and laughed, and made faces, and did ten thousand unseemly things, less, as I believe, from entering into the views and principles of her elder sister, than because she was really afraid of incurring her displeasure by affecting a diffidence which her senior would call dissimulation, or practising a propriety which she would pronounce prudery. When she was out of her presence she was gentle, calm, and rational.

I saw that Harriet was surprised at my being so accompanied, but when I explained to her the excursion of Miss Kitty, and the reasons why the quiet Jenny declined to accompany her, my wife's coldly-set features—for she could not look regularly cross—relaxed into an agreeable expression of complacency, which was followed shortly after by a beckoning invitation to Jenny to come and sit by her on the sofa. I saw that Jenny felt this mark of kindness. Harriet, till then, had made no great distinction in her attentions to the

sisters ; the change had a great effect upon a tender heart—a heart which seemed to me worth saving from the wreck which threatened that of Kate.

Having made up this little treaty of peace, I thought it right to seek out the Nubleys, who generally retired to their room about noon, to talk over their business with regard to Chittagong ; for although Nubley had been now two whole days and part of a third located within walking distance of the concern, he had never yet ventured to take any steps to ascertain how the Thompsons were actually comporting themselves in his *château*. Before I reached their apartment, they were, however, both absent ; and I concluded that he had at length “screwed his courage to the sticking place,” and marched forth to take a view of the premises, or rather, perhaps, to hold council with the auctioneer, &c , who had let the house for him to these unseemly tenants, but to whom Nubley had, from a sort of indefinable delicacy, not yet spoken on the subject, because he happened also to be the undertaker employed to conduct the obsequies of poor Tom.

Time, and as it appears, no great length of it, brings many more things to light than philosophy dreams of ; and we were destined just at this period of the day to be illuminated upon the subject of Lieutenant Merman's departure, in a manner, from a quarter, and to an extent which certainly none of us could possibly have anticipated. This circumstance was most fortunate for the peace and happiness of Fanny, who, without some almost miraculous interposition, could not have been expected, indignant as she naturally felt at his precipitate conduct, to banish upon the instant from her mind and memory—for I really believe her heart was even yet unscathed—an avowed suitor who had been so long and constantly her companion, whose passion for astronomy was quite as ardent as mine had been before my happy union with Harriet, and who, with infinitely less sentiment in his composition than I in those days possessed, used to stroll on the bright summer's evenings through those well-known walks, where first I had unconsciously learned to hate *him* and love my wife.

The truth is, that the domestic history of the Rectory had been for the last few months "progressing," as the Americans have it, much after the fashion of a Spanish comedy, in which the ladies have maid-servants and the gentlemen have men-servants, who invariably go and "come like shadows" of their masters and mistresses, and who, besides seconding the endeavours of their principals in bringing about a happy conclusion to their adventures, wile away time by performing parts exactly similar, only in a lower degree.

The girls at the Rectory have amongst them a trusty *soubrette*, who, when Foxcroft followed her mistress, undertook the duty of attendance on both Fanny and Bessy; and a nice, modest, rosy-cheeked girl she is. Lieutenant Merman's servant—not a soldier—was naturally a good deal about the Rectory, and being what is called an uncommonly smart fellow, Sally Kerridge was not altogether insensible to the sly looks with which he accompanied the delivery of any *billet* sent "special" to Miss Fanny Wells, and delivered direct into the said Sally's hand. As time wore on, looks came to words, and it certainly had been remarked by the minor scandal-mongers of Blissford, that Sally Kerridge and the Captain's (Captain by Blissfordrevet) man were not unfrequently seen walking together in the evenings, when *his* master and *her* mistress were doing the same thing elsewhere. Whether the Captain's man sought brighter stars than Sally's eyes, or contented himself with reading his fate there, the records of Blissford do not inform us; but certain it is, that when matters were drawing to a close, as we all supposed, and Miss Wells was about to become Mrs. Merman, Miss Kerridge did venture to inquire of her young mistress as to her intentions respecting the tenure of the appointment which she held about her person, and whether she was to accompany her in her then capacity, or remain with Miss Bessy at the Rectory.

The answer which Fanny gave, without at all comprehending the extent of its import, was so favourable to the hopes of the applicant, that she and Mr. Thomas Lazenby speedily came to an understanding; in consequence whereof

Mr. Thomas Lazenby was duly accepted by Miss Sally Kerridge; a development of the tender engagement being only delayed until the marriage of the principals should be formally announced.

Now, under these circumstances, and considering that Thomas was the confidential minister of the Lieutenant, and so essential to his comfort that he could not even travel half a day's journey without him, it struck Tom as exceedingly odd, that when his master took his departure for his Aunt Pennefather's, he thought proper to dispense with his services. It was exceedingly agreeable to Tom that he did so, because it left him master of his time during his absence; but still he wondered, and was fidgetty, inasmuch as the moment a favourite servant finds out that his patron *can* do without him for a little, he generally begins to suspect that he will, not very long after, do without him entirely. So it was, however, and Tom's worst anticipations were realised by hearing from Sally that she verily believed it was all *of* between the Captain and her young lady.

The Lieutenant returned, and it was all "on again;" Tom banished his doubts; Sally dismissed her fears, and every thing "progressed" as before. These halcyon days, however, were not to last for ever; and when the Lieutenant for a second time quitted Blissford, a second time did he leave Tom behind him.

Matters, although the cases so far were parallel, nevertheless did not run so regularly upon this occasion; for the *same* post which brought my worthy father-in-law *the* letter which so infuriated him, brought a note to Tom from the Lieutenant, directing him to pay off whatever bills might be owing in the place, to deliver an accompanying inclosed letter to the sergeant, and then to come forthwith to him at Mrs. Pennefather's, bringing the sergeant with him, as he had business to transact with him, which must be done before his successor in the recruiting service should arrive at Blissford; and moreover, to pack up his things, and lose no time in obeying his instructions.

"It's all over, Sally," said Tom; "it's *my* belief the affair with Miss Fanny is entirely and regularly floored."

"I think so, too," said Sally; "for, my dear Tom, she

has been crying all the morning, and master has been storming about like mad : rely upon it that it never will be a match."

"Isn't that a pretty business?" said Tom. "I'm ordered off with the sergeant at half-an-hour's warning, pack and baggage ; and perhaps, Sally, we may never meet again."

"We !" said Sally. "Why, Tom, what have we to do with them? *We* have had no quarrel—*my* father is not the Parson of Blissford, nor is *your* aunt going to make you marry somebody else."

"No," said Tom, "that's quite true, Sally ; but then, if my master does not marry at all?—perhaps, too, he may be going abroad—why, then, what should we do? I should not like you to be lady's-maid to an unmarried lieutenant, don't you see?"

"No, I don't see," said Sally. "Give up his service, and I'll give up mine, and we will try and better ourselves, and set up a shop."

"A shop !" said Tom. "Isn't that low? Shopkeeper don't sound well,"

"Sound well!" said Sally ; "I think it sounds uncommon well. Half the great people in England are shopkeepers."

"Yes, Sally," said Tom, "but we should never be great people. As it is, you see, here we are: the Lieutenant finds me clothes, meat, drink, and lodging, and pays me four-and-twenty pounds a-year for eating his mutton, sitting by his fire, reading his books, drinking his wine, carrying his letters, and walking about with *you*. Miss Fanny is nearly as civil to *you*. Now, suppose we resign promiscuously—as the great folks say, throw up office,—and start, like Romulus and Remus in Shakspeare's *Paradise Lost*,

'The world before us where to choose.'

Well, Sally, we choose—Gosport for instance——"

"Gos——" exclaimed Sally.

"Well, not Gosport," interrupted Tom. "I only mentioned Gosport because it first incontinently came into my head ; and we marry——"

"Well, I'm sure Tom !" said Sally.

"Oh, yes, Sally," said Tom, "I mean all *that*. Well, and before we marry——"

"Well?" said Sally anxiously. "What before we marry?"

"We settle upon some genteel occupation," said Tom, "in the green-grocery line, for instance. 'Table-beer sold here,' eh? Or, in the chandlery, 'Licensed to deal in pepper, tea, and tobacco,' or whatever it may be. So much for coming in and fixtures—then we must furnish;—then comes the rent—the taxes—stock to buy—mutton—bread—butter—beer—(sherry, port, and madeira wholly out of the question)—coals—candles—salt—mustard—everything in the mortal world, and no wages whatever."

"But then one is independent," said Sally.

"So far as having nothing to depend upon," said Tom. "No, Sally, don't let us be in a hurry; let us see how the land lies. This matter betwixt my master and Miss has been off before,—it may come on again. I'll go, as he bids me. I'll find out all how and about it at our aunt's, and write you a full, true, and particular account of the whole preliminaries. I should be glad if we could manage so as to continue with him, if it can be done with propriety, Sally, for, although he does not seem to be aware of it, I assure you, my dear *charymee*, he has a treasure of a servant in Thomas Lazenby."

"But then, Tom," said Miss Kerridge, (who was really very fond of her "young ladies,") "supposing the Captain marries somebody else?"

"There you have hit it, Sally," said Tom; "that's it. Why, then, and in that case, you know we could both favour them incontinently with our attentions."

"What, and leave Miss Fanny?" said Sally.

"We won't talk of that now," said Tom; "it mayn't be necessary. We may be all wrong, and all may come right at last; so, as the sergeant is waiting, and the chaise ready, I'll be off, and by this very night's post I'll write. What, Sally; d'ye think I won't?" added Tom, with one of those looks which invariably lead to a practical result.

The answer was given—not in words; and after this chaste salute, Tom ran off towards his master's lodgings,

Sally's eyes never quitting the object of her affections till an obscure corner hid him from her gaze.

"He *will* write," said Sally to herself, as she walked towards the Rectory at a pace that would have indicated to any observer the agitation of her mind ;—"I know he will write ; and if his master is going to be married—but he cannot—well, I won't think of *that*—I—no—I *could* not leave the young ladies—yet I love Tom—and—oh, dear, dear ! I declare, I have forgot Miss Fanny's crape after all," and suddenly turning herself about, Sally Kerridge hurried back to Twig and Dilberry's, the Swan and Edgar's of Blissford, where she encountered the weeping Kitty buying love of one of the shop-boys under the fostering auspices of the apothecary's wife.

The result of the parting promise of Tom to Miss Kerridge was his complete exposure of Lieutenant Merman's conduct throughout the affair with Fanny. On the following day the promised letter came, and having been read and re-read by those bright eyes to which it was specially addressed, was brought up to Miss Wells by her faithful maid, who, irritated to the highest pitch by the conduct of the Lieutenant to her Tom, suddenly resolved on "showing the soger officer up" to her young lady, not calculating that, however consolatory Miss Fanny's entire separation from him might in consequence be, the memory of his deceit and defection would necessarily prey heavily upon her mind.

"Miss Fanny," said Kerridge, entering the room pensively, her eyes red with crying, "I beg you a thousand pardons, but I do think you ought to know what a vile wretch that Captain Merman is."

"Kerridge," said Fanny, "do you know whom you are speaking to?"

"Yes, Miss Fanny, to you—dear Miss Fanny, to you," said Sally ; "do you know he has turned away Tom?"

"Who is Tom?" said Fanny.

"My Tommy, Miss Fanny," said Kerridge.

"Your Tommy !" said Miss Wells.

"Yes, Miss, my Tommy, his Tommy ;" and Kerridge burst into tears : "however, I haven't turned him off—nor

has he turned *me* off—and, I dare say, he'll be here to-morrow; but that is not it, Miss—it is about his brute of a master—thank goodness, he is *not* his master—it's about you, Miss. The way he has treated you, Miss. Oh! shameful."

"Why, Kerridge," said Fanny, "you are mad, I think."

"Not I, Miss," said Sally. "Here, Miss, do take and read this letter."

"Who is it from?" said Fanny.

"It is from Tommy, Miss," replied Sally; "but it will tell you the whole story."

"I really cannot think of doing any such thing," said Fanny; "and I must beg you to leave me, and take your letter with you, and I desire you will not talk in this manner again."

"I mean no harm, Miss," said the poor girl, "indeed I don't; but it is so shameful—I can't——"

At this period of the dialogue a slight tap at the door announced a visiter; the "Come in" of Fanny was followed by the appearance of her father, who had some communication to make, but who drew back upon seeing Miss Kerridge in tears.

"What is the matter?" said Wells.

"Oh, nothing sir," said the weeping damsel; "only, sir, I have had a letter from Thomas, and it tells all about the Captain, and I wish my young lady to read it, and she won't: perhaps you will, sir; indeed you should:—you don't know half what a man he is."

"Well," said my father-in-law, "although I entirely approve of your young lady's refusal to read the letter, I am sure you are actuated by the best motives."

"Ay, that I am, sir," said Sally, wiping her eyes with a delicate muslin apron.

"And if you think the family ought to be made acquainted with its contents, I will read it. Who is it from, did you say?"

"My Thomas, sir," said Kerridge, colouring very red.

"Your Thomas?" said Mr. Wells.

"Yes, sir," said Sally; "I will tell you all that another

time, sir: we have to ask you about it, sir; but, sir, he is the Captain's servant."

"Captain!" said Wells, who was just in the humour to put down Merman, and put up anybody else; "call him Lieutenant, child—and don't cry. Is Thomas the man who used to sit in your pew at church?"

"Yes, sir," said Kerridge; "he never missed twice a day every Sunday, besides the winter six o'clock lecture."

"Well," said my father-in-law, "leave the letter in my hands, and I will tell you what I think of Thomas when I have read it."

"Oh, it isn't of him, sir," said Sally; "you won't think any harm, I know, for there is not any kind of harm in him, sir; if there had been, he would not have been so well thought of by me."

"Well, Kerridge," said the Rector, "I again say I thank you for your anxiety about my daughter. You shall have your letter back in a few minutes."

"Thank you, sir," said Kerridge, and she turned to leave the room; but just as she had got to the door a sudden thought seemed to strike her, and turning quickly round she looked wistfully in Wells's face, and said, with all the *naïveté* imaginable, "I beg your pardon, sir,—please don't look at the little bit that's under the fold of the direction."

"Rely upon me, Kerridge," said the Rector; and Kerridge vanished.

Whether Wells read the letter while in Fanny's room, or in her presence, I do not recollect; all I know is, that he showed it to me, having posted up to Ashmead expressly for the purpose. I hastily copied it all, except "the little bit under the fold," which I held sacred—at least as far as transcribing went.

"Diansgrove,——, 18—.

"According to promise, dear Sarah, I write, although I have but little time to spare. First and foremost, I shall be out of the Captain's service before this time to-morrow—he has no fault to find with me, he says, and will give me an excellent character, but he does not wish, for particular reasons, that I should continue with him—which particular

is merely and promiscuously this, namely, that I know all his goings on with Miss Fanny—and the way in which he has behaved, which between you and me and the bed-post turns out to be most shocking. If I was to treat you in corresponding style you would annalate me, and I would deserve it—but I won't dear Sarah—never.

“What do you think—I knew something was going wrong as I told you by his leaving me behind when he came here on his first visit to Miss Penfeather or whatever his aunt's name is—when he made ready to present himself to Miss Malooney—I don't exactly know the topography of her name—she was non compos as they say, that is, nowhere to be found—upon which his aunt was in a pretty quandary and fell into high streaks and was miscellaneously distracted—mind I had the whole of the pedigree from one of Mrs. Pennefeather's maids called Susan, who was an eye-witness to the entire transaction.

“Well—Miss Malooney, you understand, had evaporated out of the house before dinner, and continued in that state for three days, having wrote a letter to Miss Pennefeather to say she would not have my master if his skin was stuffed with guineas, for she had given her heart to another—a tall stout gentleman (unless I misunderstand Susan) with green earrings—I knew he was an Irishman, and I think that was what Susan said he wore—but I have been here only so few hours that I think I must simultaneously astonish you to think how I have contrived to get into all their little secrets so soon.

“Well, dear Sarah, so this being the case and Miss Malooney gone, my master couldn't marry her because she wouldn't have him, and because besides that she was irrecoverably out of the way—so—Miss Penfeather or whatever it is, told him—mind I had this from Susan, who has been helping me to put the Captain's room to rights—for the last time but one indiscriminately, Sarah dear—that she would give him half the ten thousand pounds—that is after her death, that he was to have had during his life with Miss Malooney—and he might marry incontinently and surreptitiously anybody he pleased—and with that, dear Sarah, he went back to me and the Parsonage and whistled the busi-

ness on again relying upon the inflexible tuberosity of Miss Fanny's affection for him.

"Now comes the elasticity of the co-operation. Back he comes, and as we know, dear, Miss Fanny instinctively receives him again into her favour upon the incipient principle, and up they go to Ashmead. 'Give me my best stock,' I recollect the Captain saying to me—'Lazenby, take care that the strings of my waistcoat don't come out under my jacket because they are not overclean.' And I remember giving him out his bottle of *jeu d'esprit* to scent his handkerchief, and rub up the back of his hair with to set him off to the best advantage, and he put on his best pantaloons made by Stools of Clifford-street, which show off the gentleman to real advantage—that is, Sarah, if there is anything of the gentleman about the wearer—and dear Sarah I will say confidently between you and me and the bed-post, if he wasn't a gentleman with the King's admission, very little of the quality of one would be found in him—but as I was saying insidiously, up he went—well and it was all kiss and make friends and all that, and so very well—but now comes what Lady Teazle says in Otway's *Clandestine Marriage* 'the damned spot.' What do you think, dearest S.? Miss Malooney after having been gone, as I before contumaciously heard, for three days and nights, comes back to Diansgrove—that's the name of this place—throws herself into Miss Pennfeather's arms and confides to her the eleemosynary circumstance that she has not been able to find the gentleman with the green earrings to whom she had given her heart.

"My dear Sarah, to use the words of my favourite Dr Dryden—whose poems I have read—and which you shall when we two are one—says with immaculate expression—'this is fudge, all fudge'—for Susan told me from circumstances which I will hereafter emanate to you, that she knew for certain that she did find him, and saw him, and eluded him upon the point, and that after two days and three nights constant endeavours on her part to make him behave to her like a gentleman, he told her she was labouring under an entire misconception of the state of his infections, and *cut que cut* forced her home to her aunt's.

"When she came back—it was, Susan says, such a scene—weeping and wailing—because she had not found her friend—'Mam'—says Susan 'that won't do—we know better.' And so in this state of betwixity and betweenity, what does the aunt do but write to the Captain and gives him another chance at Miss Mellicent, who having been out on her travels is glad enough to take him indiscriminately on his own terms; and so then he says fortunately enough—done and done—and so Miss says done and done too, and then the thing is all done together, what's past can't be recalled, so they wipe it all up and say nothing more about it, and the Captain sends to Miss Fanny's father, and tells him a long story about a cock and a bull, which indiscriminately relates to the chap in the green earrings—and so that's the plain fact.

"Sarah, my dear, I am delighted that Captain Merman—who between you and me and the bed-post is no more a captain than Billy Rattan the old sergeant here—has distinctly and intuitively turned me off. I couldn't have stopped with him after this explosion—and I am certain you would not have permitted yourself to have been conglomerated with Miss Malooney under any circumstances—Susan says she would not for the world, and Mrs. Gibson, who was Miss Malooney's maid, has, to use the words of Shenstone, in his "Deserted Village," 'hopped the twig' in disgust.

"To-morrow night, dear Sarah, I shall be at Blissford—but as I promised to write I have written—to-morrow about eight o'clock I will be at the old place, and——"

Here I came to the turned-down passage, and wrote no further, quite satisfied with the exposure of as much meanness, hypocrisy, and heartlessness as ever characterised a man, who, to use Mr. Lazenby's words, "was, by his Majesty's admission," a gentleman. I confess I was not at all sorry—even if the means by which we came to the knowledge of his real character were not perhaps strictly legitimate, that we had anyhow arrived at it; it could not fail to smoothe all difficulties with regard to our poor Fanny, who could no longer continue to regret a lover who, if he had not in the first instance been attracted to her by the expectation of money, had committed the negative, if not positive

crime of giving her up when something better in the way of fortune tempted him.

The style in which his servant wrote was somewhat amusing, but it was evident that the view he took of the whole case was tolerably correct. It occurred to me, I admit, that after my father-in-law's condescension in accepting the perusal of the letter, and his consequent admission or permission—implied, if not expressed—of the attachment existing between Miss Kerridge and Mr. Lazenby, that Mr. Lazenby would inevitably become a kind of appendage to one or other of the establishments at the Rectory or Ashmead; and then again, there was nothing I could think of, nothing I could imagine, that did not bring back my apprehensions and anticipations as to the precariousness of my tenure here; still my delight at having Merman decidedly expelled and properly exposed, got the better—at least for two hours—of every other feeling.

But the storm I had to encounter in the interval between my interview with Wells, letter in hand from Merman himself, and this explanatory one, was something terrific. Harriet was so well satisfied with Jane's conduct, and the resolution at which she had arrived as to going to Sniggs's, that she endured—nay, perhaps that is too strong a term—she was pleased with her society, and remained with her, until Kate's return from the love market, and from visiting the remains of her dear brother.

She came home accompanied by Mrs. Sniggs, who not venturing to intrude farther than the hall, left her there, having imprinted on her damask cheek a kiss, accompanied by a promise that Mr. Sniggs would be up in the morning, and that any suggestion she might make would be, of course, attended to.

There was a crisis at hand. Kate's return was followed by a summons from her to Jane to attend her in *her* room. Jane gaining strength against tyranny by encouragement from Harriet, whose manner assured and engaged her, sent word by the maid that she was with Mrs. Gurney, and that she might come to *her* (having obtained permission), or she must wait till she could leave her aunt.

This answer to her message set Kitty into a flame. She,

the possessor of the order from head-quarters ; she who had, under the protection of Mrs. Sniggs, defied the power of her aunt, to be treated in this disrespectful and unceremonious manner ! Lucky indeed was it for her maid that she was somewhat older, larger, and stronger than Kitty, else, in the paroxysm which followed the message, she would, in all probability have fallen a victim to her excessive rage.

“La ! Miss,” said the maid, “why do you put yourself in a passion about people like these ? why what are they ?—only charity children of dear Mr. Cuthbert, your dear father ; don’t let them see that you care about them. I’m sure, after their treatment of poor Master Thomas, they deserve neither notice nor respect. If I was you, Miss Katharine, I would go straight, right an end, to Mrs. Gurney’s room, and walk in without so much as knocking at the door or saying with your leave or by your leave, and I should just tell them all about your visit to your dear brother’s venerable remains, and describe it to them ; tell them how he looked, and what a place he is in, and all that, and make them cry their nasty hearts out ; and as for Miss Jane, she ought to be ashamed of going and carneying over these people, who want to rob her and you of your rightful fortune.”

This conversation, or rather this harangue, with all of which I accidentally became acquainted, had the desired effect, and stirred Miss Katharine up to the execution of her maid’s design ; and accordingly, with Cuthbert’s letter in her hand, and without—according to prescription—any knocking or tapping at the door, she flounced into Harriet’s room. Luckily, as it happened, I was on my road thither too, and almost immediately followed the sylph-like *danseuse* into the apartment.

“So, Jane,” said Kate, without even affecting the civility of first noticing my wife, “you do not choose to come to my room to hear what I have to tell you—you have no feeling—no heart, Jenny—and so I shall write and tell pappy—I—have—seen—Tommy ;” and thereupon she burst into tears.

“I know you have,” said Jane ; “you went out on purpose.”

"I—never—saw—anybody dead before," sobbed Kate. "but I am glad I went," and here she cried exceedingly.

"Kitty," said Harriet, rising from her seat and taking her hand in her hands, "my dear girl, you should not cry in this manner. What avails all this sorrow?—he is gone to a better world; indeed if you had consulted *me*, I should have strongly urged the uselessness of such a visit—I might almost add, the danger."

I felt a slight shudder at the thought—my poor baby unconsciously sleeping within three yards of the excited young lady.

"I don't care for danger," said Kate; "and as for asking *you*, aunt, I knew you would not have let me go, and so did Mrs. Brandyball, and that was the reason she confided the whole arrangement to Mrs. Sniggs, who is such a very nice woman."

"Kitty," said Harriet, "whatever opinion Mrs. Brandyball may form of strangers, not only to herself but to us, I must be permitted to think that we, who are the nearest connexions you have in England, and who can have no interest separate from yours, are quite as likely to advise for the best as Mrs. Sniggs."

"Yes," said Kate, "that is quite true; but then you say you are not able to be out and about shopping."

"No," said Harriet; "nor should I be out and about shopping, while your brother lay unburied, even if I were otherwise well enough to undertake the fatigue."

"Ah, well," said Kate, with an air of independence more impertinent than anything I had yet seen,—"*that's as you think*: of course I am not so old as you are, and don't know so much; but I am older than Jane, and when I order her to do anything, good-natured as I am to her in general, I expect it to be done."

"Not," said I, "if what you ask is contrary to her feelings and principles."

"I don't *now*," said Kate, "about principles; but I know that when Tom was alive, I didn't care more for him than she did; but now that he is dead and all that, I wished

to go and see him in his coffin—not only because he was my brother, but because I knew it would please pappy.”

I wish any indifferent person had been present to have seen the expression of my poor Harriet’s countenance at the end of this pretty speech.

“However, I *have* been,” said Kate, “and have done what is right, and have bought what I wanted at the shop; and now I sha’n’t want to go out any more till the funeral.”

“You continue,” said I, “in the same mind about going to the funeral, Kitty?”

“Of course I do,” said Kate. “Pappy wishes it; and Mr. Sniggs, when he comes here,—either this afternoon or to-morrow, I forget which—(he said he would come when he could)—will tell you that it is the express desire of pappy that we should go.”

“Pray, Kitty,” said I, “didn’t my brother send any note or letter to me? You haven’t forgotten or mislaid any parcel?”

“Oh no,” said Kate; “pappy said that, as poor Tom was turned out of the house, and died at the Doctor’s, you of course cared nothing about it; and he is so much obliged to the Sniggses, that I believe he only meant us to come nere because the Sniggses have no room in their house for us.”

“No, Kate,” said Jane, “I don’t think pappy meant that: he said, as long as Ashmead belonged to Uncle Gilbert we might as well have the use of it.”

“Ah, well,” said Kitty, “it was something of that sort, I know.”

Here slipped out unintentionally a pretty sort of allusion to my occupancy, which did not escape the notice of Harriet, who, I believe, permitted this scene to be acted in her room, in order to catch the points as they fell.

“However,” said Kate, “I am glad I went, for I have got the music part all settled.”

“The what?” said Harriet.

“The music,” said Kate. “Pappy was very anxious—so Mrs. Brandybail writes, at least—that there should be

some solemn music played upon the organ when poor Tom was brought in——”

“I know,” said Harriet; “I have heard that.”

“They do it abroad, don’t they?” said Jane, in perfect innocence.

“I don’t know, dear,” said Harriet. “Well, and,——”

“So, as Mr. Sniggs told us,” said Kate, “in the morning, that Mr. Stopzanpoff, the German, who is organist here, is gone to London, I got Mrs. Sniggs to call on Mr. Kittington, who plays upon all sorts of instruments, to ask him to do the dirge.”

“And was he at home?” said I.

“Yes,” said Kate; “and he has promised to do it, out of respect to pappy.”

“Miss Kitty,” said Harriet, firing with rage, and rising from her seat, “this is too bad!—I declare——”

“Harriet, my love,” said I, “pray, pray consider.”

CHAPTER XV.

I WAS just in time to save the explosion—Harriet’s good sense came suddenly at my call to check the expression of her feelings; and, contenting herself with lifting up her eyes, and firmly closing her lips, she threw herself back in her chair, not, however, without Kate’s perceiving that she was considerably excited, and that her forbearance was an effort: still, it was clear to me, from the manner in which she mentioned the dancing-master’s readiness to do the dirge, that she was not at all aware of the extent of my knowledge of her previous proceedings with regard to that person; and I satisfied myself also that after Kittington’s conduct about the letter, he would do nothing inconsistent with honour and propriety.

To have refused to do that which Kate, as I imagined had, in Cuthbert’s name, requested him to do, would have been impossible. His agreeing to play the organ—since

according to the young lady's version of the history, my ill-starred brother was so anxious about such a performance—was no indication of any change in his views and feelings as regarded herself, and the presence of Mrs. Sniggs would naturally have hindered any conversation—except, indeed, with “eloquent eyes”—between them, in the way of explanation, as to his not having answered her affectionate letter.

“Well, then,” said Kitty, apropos to nothing, “I shall go and take off my bonnet and things, and set my maid to work to make up my mourning. Come, Jane, I have had all the trouble of fetching you, so I desire you will do as I bid you.”

“My mourning is all ready,” said Jane, “and I am reading to my aunt; when I have finished I will come.”

“Well, I’m sure!” said Kitty, with a toss of her head that would have suited Gay’s Lucy; “see if I don’t tell pappy how very rudely you behaved to me.”

And away she went. As she closed the door sharply, Jane’s eyes rested on Harriet’s face, and a sympathetic expression of feeling animated both their countenances, which I did not regret to see. I begin to like Jane—nay I this very day called her Jenny; and the adoption of what Entick oddly enough calls the *abbreviation* of the word Jane into Jenny, and Ann into Nancy, convinced me, almost unconsciously, that affection is taking place of formality.

Two events rapidly succeeded this scene, for one of which only I was altogether unprepared; for although it might seem that I had had no very favourable opportunity of making myself well acquainted with the world’s ways, I had a sort of intuitive perception into character, and fancied that I should not often be deceived into a miscalculation of the real qualities of those with whom I came in contact.

The former of the two events was the arrival of Mr. Sniggs, clad in a suit of sables, which shone like sticking-plaster—his shirt cuffs doing duty as weepers, and his hat nearly covered with crape.

“Good morning, sir,” said Galen: “I haven’t been able to get to you before—a good deal of sickness flying about—hope all’s well here?”

"Yes," said I, "we ought to be very grateful."

"I suppose," said Sniggs, "that Miss Falwasser has informed you of your kind brother's solicitous anxiety to pay every respect to the memory of the dear departed—I think all the arrangements are now nearly complete."

"Miss Falwasser," said I, "has not been particularly communicative upon the point; nor did it seem necessary that she should be so, since my brother has confided his daughters-in-law, *pro hac vice* at least, to Mrs. Sniggs."

"Ah there it is," said Sniggs; "I knew it—I told Mrs. S. I said, 'Depend upon it Mrs. S., they will be miffed, up at Ashmead, at your interference.' However, my dear sir, what could we do?—there was the letter—the kind and generous letter—of that most excellent brother of yours; and of course we could not remonstrate with him upon the point."

"There was not the least occasion for your doing so," said I; "Cuthbert has every right to please himself; and, I assure you, I think the details which have been entrusted to you and Mrs. Sniggs are not of a nature to gratify any person to whom they are confided."

"I believe," said Sniggs, "that Mr. Cuthbert intends asking Mr. Wells to give a funeral sermon next Sunday, to which I conclude he will not object. The subject is so moving—so touching—the early flower nipped in its bud—the instability of earthly vanities—the——"

"Has Cuthbert written to the Rector?" said I.

"I don't know," replied Sniggs; "but I know Mrs. Brandyball told me she should do so."

The conversation which had passed between that estimable lady and my vivacious father-in-law on the evening when she described the merits of Montpelier, and the impression it had made upon his mind, flashed into my memory as my medical friend talked of a correspondence between them upon such a subject as this.

"But," said Sniggs, raising his eyebrows into an arch of interesting inquisitiveness, "perhaps if she should omit to do so—you would——"

"Oh dear no!" said I; "I could not think of interfering in any of the proceedings."

"Oh! I see," said Sniggs; "only, as you have been good enough to request Mr. Kittington to supply the place of Dr. Stopzanpoff at the organ during the funeral ceremony, I thought perhaps you might extend your kindness a little farther."

Now came a puzzler. It was clear that Miss Kitty had used *my* name in making the request to Mr. Kittington, and it was equally clear that he must think me the most extraordinary of all human beings, after what had occurred between us, to send that volatile young lady on a commission to his house, even under the protection of so respectable a chaperone as Mrs. Sniggs. The question was—and it was to be decided on the instant—should I repel the insinuation, and, by declaring the truth, proclaim Miss Kitty Falwasser that which I knew her to be? or by slurring over the affair in its present stage, content myself with disabusing the mind of the dancing-master at the first favourable opportunity? If I took the former course, "war to the knife" would soon be the cry from the Cuthbert party, and my reasons for positively denying the fact, and for Kate's taking upon herself to use my name, would necessarily be required; and then adieu to all further concealment of any of the other circumstances of the case. If I adopted the latter, I might in another hour vindicate myself to Mr. Kittington, at the sacrifice, certainly, of Kate's reputation for veracity; but as the young lady herself had thought proper long since to let Mr. Kittington into some of the peculiarities of her disposition and character, not altogether disconnected from dissimulation, nor much more venal than a plain straightforward falsehood, and as I felt I was safe with *him*, I resolved upon merely listening to the further disclosures of my medical friend, without saying yea or nay upon this last curious and surprising point of the young lady's conduct.

"I have fixed ten o'clock for the funeral," said Sniggs; "I will send a mourning-coach up here at a quarter before. The young ladies, I presume, adhere to their original intention of attending the mournful ceremony?"

"Really," said I, "I cannot answer that question, for Miss Kate does not admit me to her confidence. I *have*

an opinion on the subject, but I suppose if Cuthbert wishes it, he is to be considered omnipotent."

"It will be an affecting sight," said Sniggs, looking pathetic— "the two sisters following their brother's body; don't you think so? It will show that whatever people may say, he was not really neglected."

"Say?" exclaimed I; "what! do people say anything about it?"

"Why," said Sniggs—"no—not much—but folks *will* talk—and some of the gossips think it hard that the poor boy should have been removed from the care of his immediate relations to .—"

"Mr. Sniggs," said I, interrupting the unamiable leech, "he was removed from this house, from which his only two immediate relations were (by Cuthbert's own orders, also, removed) 'o yours; a proof of the confidence which was placed in you by my brother and myself—a proof which I really should have thought might have been flattering to you in a particular degree. It is true the poor boy died—here he mig't have lived—that was not to be foreseen; in *this* house cherry-brandy is not left in the unlocked cupboards of sick boys' bed-rooms to be swallowed at pleasure."

I had said—I, who passed my whole life in restraining the animation of Harriet upon all such points, had, as her maid Foxcroft would have said, "outed with it." The words were past recall. Sniggs knew my mind—he stood aghast—I saw my advantage, and, with the rapidity of a prize-fighter, followed it up, and before the apothecary could recover his "wind," added, "And that fact I shall take care to let my poor deluded brother know, in order that he may judge how wisely he has disposed of his confidence."

Sniggs turned pale, whether with rage or apprehension I know not; but he was evidently summoning all the energies of his mind to form a reply, when a servant entered the room and told me that Captain Thompson, who was living at Chittagong Lodge, was in the morning-room, and wished to see me—about what, I knew not, never having seen *him* in my life, except at church, with his two nieces, or sisters, as they were sometimes called, and a cousin or two, whose com-

plexions seemed to combine the beauties of the lily and the rose, in a manner little calculated to excite any great admiration of Nature's special bounty, and who were very much looked at in the parish, without being much looked upon. I desired the servant to say I was engaged at the moment, but would wait upon the Captain in a few minutes. This little interruption seemed to cool my Galen, and give him time to consider his reply to my somewhat abrupt insinuation; it had, however, the effect of moderating the ire which, presuming upon Cuthbert's credulity as to his merits, and ignorance as to his faults, he seemed at first very much inclined to exhibit.

"Why, sir," said he, "I admit"—and he appeared to be truly affected, and I began to be proportionably sorry for my abruptness—"I admit that the affair of the cherry-bounce was a misfortune; it was, I also admit, not calculated upon; but I have the satisfaction, and a very pleasurable feeling it is, to know that the poor boy must have died under the influence of the disease, whether he had drunk the cherry-brandy or not."

"And therefore," said I, "he would have died here, as surely as he did die at your house?"

"Unquestionably," said Sniggs; "he had precisely the same medicines, diet, and medical attendance *there* as he would have had *here*."

I thought the reasoning of my unconscious friend, as to the certainty of his dissolution, under the circumstances, and under his care, conclusive, not to speak of the satisfaction which he appeared to derive from the conviction.

"Then," said I, "that being the case, why talk of the idle gossipings of the people here, which, if they have any effect at all, must tell to your disadvantage, and not mine?"

"I do *not* talk of them," said Sniggs, evidently disconcerted, "as a matter of my own opinion—only—I know that Mr. Cuthbert feels——"

"—— He does not feel, Mr. Sniggs," said I; "he is a mere automaton in the hands of other people. Cuthbert advised the boy's removal—fled from him himself—carried off the boy's sisters—and, with all this show of devotion to his memory, does not think of coming here, because Mrs. Brandyball thinks it likely to conduce more to the success of her

designs upon him to be left alone with him at Bath; for which reasons—and others which I will not mention—the poor girls are sent here to parade themselves in what I, and everybody else, must consider a most unseemly and unbecoming position. Now, there's *my* opinion, and you have it, and are quite at liberty to communicate it to my brother."

"Why," said Sniggs, rather startled by the unexpected earnestness of my manner, "I—really—to say truth—I do not know whether you have had any communication on the point, but I believe the attendance of the young ladies sprang from the genuine feelings of Miss Kitty herself."

"Genuine nonsense!" said I; "I want to know nothing about the matter. I shall be ready, when the carriage comes to take me to your house, and thence to the funeral; but as I feel bound by no ties of relationship to the poor boy who is gone, and by very slender ties of connexion, I should do a violence to my candour, and the sense of what is due to myself, if I were to affect a depth of grief,—which, if Miss Falwasser's sincerity were equally to be questioned, I doubt she does not in the least understand. My brother, as I have already said, has confided to you and your lady all these arrangements, and I am quite ready to obey your orders, delighted to be relieved from a responsibility which, at all times, is critical and embarrassing, and which, upon this occasion, would assuredly induce me to set my face most decidedly against a proceeding as unusual as it seems preposterous: however, I have, as you know, a gentleman waiting, and must take my leave. I shall be ready when the coach comes, and of course, if the young ladies continue in the mind—and Mrs. Sniggs does not object—they will be my companions. And so good morning."

Saying which, I bowed myself out of the room, and went down stairs to receive my new and unexpected visiter, leaving Mr. Sniggs in a state to which I certainly, in the beginning of our conversation, had not the remotest idea of reducing him.

Upon entering the morning-room, I found Captain Thompson pacing the apartment, looking somewhat pale and agitated, bearing in his hand a moderately sized horsewhip; with which he seemed to be practising some ungentle man-

œuvre, relative to the back and shoulders of some imaginary antagonist.—I hesitated, and said—

“Captain Thompson, I believe.”

“Exactly so, sir,” said my guest; “I ought to apologize for coming here while your windows are shut, and there’s a family corpse unburied, sir,—but a man cannot bear more than he can—that I suppose you will admit?”

The assertion seemed incontrovertible; so I bowed assent.

“Well, sir,” said the Captain, “I am a plain man.” Another truism to which I tacitly agreed.

“And mean no harm.” That I thought to myself, is by no means so clear—still I bowed. “But as you are, I dare say, aware I have been for some months tenant of that beautiful mansion which your uncle, Mr. Nubley, thinks proper to call Chittagong Lodge—”

“Not my uncle, sir,” said I. “Mr. Nubley’s connexion with *me* arises simply from his having been a partner of an elder brother of mine in India.”

“Oh,” said Thompson, “he is not a relation of yours?”

“Not in the most distant degree,” said I.

“Why then,” said Thompson, “that alters the case, and I may ask you a question without giving any personal offence, or casting any personal stigma upon the hereditary qualities of the family?”

“You may ask what question you please,” said I.

“Well then, sir,” said Thompson, shouldering the whip, is that old gentleman mad?”

“I never heard such a thing even suggested,” said I.

“Then, sir, how do you account for his conduct?” said Thompson, giving his whip a sort of horizontal shake. “What do you think he did this morning?—I came here, sir,” added the Captain, “with great pain at such a moment as this—but a soldier is jealous of his honour, and I could not rest. After walking round and round the fences and palings of the place with his lady for the last two or three days, this morning in he stalks into the house, and although I received him with all the urbanity of which I am master; and although my nieces Evelina and Rosetta, and my cousin Madelina, did everything they possibly could do to make Mrs. Nubley’s reception in her own house agreeable, he be-

gan in the most extraordinary manner to abuse *me* and my relations, mixing up all this with the greatest possible civility.

“ ‘Captain Thompson,’ said he, ‘I am glad to see you—the grounds look very pretty—infernal swindler pays no rent—anxious about the place—paper in drawing-room all smeared—vulgar dog—look at the carpet—if it is quite convenient to give me possession at Lady-day, instead of Midsummer, should feel obliged, as I have been disappointed in a house—that’s fudge—anything to get the fellow away.’ But, sir, this was a trifle. I presented him to the young ladies—and after complimenting Evelina on her beautiful complexion, for which she is really celebrated, he said, staring her full in the face, ‘The roses are rouge, and the lilies pearl powder,—tol-der-a-lol.’ I bore even this with patience, but when my cousin Madeline, as fine a young woman as ever stepped, and as good too, playfully opened the door of the second drawing-room to show him how careful we had been of the furniture, he said, ‘Thank ye, miss, thank ye;’ and, staring her full in the face, added, ‘no better than she should be, I take it.’ Now really, sir, I only ask what course can I pursue under these circumstances? I saw none open, but coming here directly, believing, moreover, that he was a relation of yours—as he is not, I feel that I ought to apologize still farther for my intrusion, and say no more, except to ask again whether he is or is not insane, as upon the answer I receive, the conduct which I shall observe towards him must mainly depend.”

“Not he, sir,” said I. “I believe him to be perfectly in his senses: he is very odd, I admit, and has a propensity to talk to himself, which to a stranger, renders his conversation very perplexing.”

“Why, sir,” said Captain Thompson, giving the horse-whip a slight flourish, “if his talking were merely talking to himself, nobody else could reasonably be offended, because a man may amuse himself as much as he pleases; and I have no doubt if Mr. Nubley did so, he would find plenty of persons to agree with him; but when he stares one in the face, and says the things that he said of me and my relations, why, really,—I—” and here again the horse-whip wagged a good deal.

"It is," said I, "purely constitutional—a habit of thinking aloud, which has grown in old age upon a naturally absent man, and while he is conversing in the ordinary worldly course of conversation, he becomes abstracted, and the truth comes out most unintentionally."

"The truth comes out, does it, sir?" said Captain Thompson, looking at me with a most ferocious expression of countenance; the horsewhip suddenly rising to something more than an angle of forty-five,—“the truth comes out, does it—eh?”

"Yes, the ingenuousness of the mind develops itself," said I.

"Oh," said Thompson, considerably excited, "the ingenuousness of the mind develops itself, does it?—what, then sir, it was in the sincerity of his heart that Mr. Nubley called me an infernal swindler, and a vulgar dog—that he said Evelina's complexion was made up of rouge and pearl-powder, and informed Madelina that she was no better than she should be—that is ingenuousness, is it, sir?—and that is *your* mode of justifying your uncle's conduct?"

"Sir," said I, "Mr. Nubley is *not* my uncle. I have before told you so."

"Well, sir," said Thompson, "at all events, you are his friend, and evidently justify his otherwise unjustifiable conduct.—I am quite aware, sir, that Mr. Gurney, and what are called the leaders of Blissford society, have thought proper to behave in a most extraordinary manner to my nieces and my cousin, and I only wanted an opportunity of ascertaining the reason why gentlewomen of family and rank—yes, sir," added Thompson, with a flourish of the whip that made it whistle in the wind,—“of rank—have been so shamefully used.—I have now discovered it, sir,—the sweet ingenuousness of this old gentleman has settled that affair, and since you have been so good as to palliate his coarseness, I shall take the liberty of transferring the necessity of an explanation to yourself. Having," added the Captain, "established this fact, I would not for the world intrude another moment upon you at this juncture, and I have again to apologize for taking the liberty I have taken at this season. But, as I before stated, I wished to

ascertain whether I were to attribute the grossnesses which fell from your uncle's lips——"

"Sir," said I, "he is *not* my uncle."

"Well, sir," continued the irritated Thompson, "it is all the same to me whether he is or not. I say, I wished to know whether I were to attribute the grossnesses which fell this morning from that old man's lips—for gentleman I will not call him—to insanity, or premeditation? You have satisfied me on that point. Not only do you state that he is sane when speaking these offensive words—but that they are the fruits of his ingenuousness.—I have done, sir——"

So much the better, thought I——

——"for the present. After the funeral and a decent period has elapsed, I shall take the liberty to send a friend to you, in order to settle our little difference!"

"Difference, sir!" said I, "I really am not aware——"

"My friend will enlighten you, sir," said Thompson. "You have shifted—very honourably, I admit, the responsibility from the shoulders of the old man on to your own. You must see that your explanation of the nature of his infirmity is a mere confirmation of the premeditated insult inflicted by him upon myself and my nearest female relations. It is, I repeat, extremely fair and handsome of you, and I shall, of course, avail myself of the earliest opportunity of setting myself right. Mr. Nubley is now safe from any personal hostility on my part, and I beg leave to bid you a very good morning."

As he proceeded towards the door, I rang the bell; and as he crossed the hall, he observed, with a degree of careless indifference, and as if his visit had been one of the most agreeable—"Very fine weather for the time of year, Mr. Gurney—pray don't come any farther—good morning."—And so—exit Thompson.

I retired to my room perfectly bewildered with the brief scene which had just been enacted. The departure of this "best of cutthroats" gave me an opportunity of inquiring of poor dear Nubley what had really occurred; of which, however, Thompson's description gave, no doubt, a tolerably correct idea. As far as I was concerned, it was clear that a personal quarrel was fastened upon me, and that Thompson,

like all the disreputable persons who are subjected to the operation of the laws and customs of good society, had long been anxious to hit some blot which might enable him to make a stir, the result of which should be to establish himself on a *locus standi*, either to be admitted with all his tribe into the circle with which they desired to mix, or to prove, by some act of violence, his readiness to make those persons pay the penalty of their fastidiousness, who had thought fit to exclude them from it.

This, although a new evil amongst the many which combined to oppress me, did not promise to be immediate in its effect; on the contrary, two or three days would at least elapse, before, according to the man's own notion of etiquette and decency, he could "send his friend to me"—a period which I honestly confess, I flattered myself might be successfully employed in averting a hostile meeting arising out of no earthly offence of mine—unless, indeed, an inadvertent expression touching the innocent murmurings of my *pseudo* uncle could be so considered. I do not think I am more nervous than my neighbours, but I was now married and had a son, and the cares of the world were upon me, and I admit that as the Captain and his horsewhip left the house, I felt a twinge in that part of my leg in which I had shot myself in my affair with Daly.

But what a girl is this Kitty!—what am I to do about *that*?—If Thompson makes me a *particeps criminis* with Nubley, what must the dancing-master think of my decency or consistency in the other affair?—I appreciate his conduct towards the little monkey who assails him—I praise it—I shake hands with him—thank him—and the next thing he finds me doing, according to *her* version, is sending her to his house to ask a favour in *my* name, under the protection of a person who has nothing on earth to do with us.—I *must* see him—I *must* again explain.

Then here is Wells, my poor dear father-in-law, as vivacious as ever, in high dudgeon about the Lieutenant, and Fanny in as towering a rage as ever excited rural beauty—*her* I have sent up to Harriet—her father I must commune with; but in the mean time what shall I do about Kittington?

"Well, sir," said I to the Rector, "has Fanny made up her mind to this business?"

"Oh dear, yes," said Wells; "I train my girls to like those I like, and to reject those I turn off. *My* notion is, that my young ladies are merely passive, and will do as I bid them."

"Well!" thought I, "this is pleasant: talk of Nubley's absence of mind offending Captain Thompson! here is the intelligent Rector propounding a doctrine of passive obedience, which, if I were tetchy or tenacious, would make me sceptical even of the devotion of my own unsophisticated wife."

"We are all creatures of habit," said Wells:—"six months settles it:—marriage is like a stage coach—when first you start, there may be a few little differences and angularities, if there be such a word:—a little shaking on the journey soon sets all that to rights, and everything settles down harmoniously. I don't know that Fanny cared much for the Lieutenant, but she liked him enough to marry him if I wished it; and they sat and flirted, and whispered, and talked a parcel of nonsense about themselves, and made themselves vastly ridiculous: and, if he had behaved as he ought to have done, I have no doubt they would have made a very comfortable couple; but as he has *cut and run*, Fanny has too much sense to care about him any more, and he will be married to Miss Maloney or Malooney, or whatever her name is, and there's an end."

All this was very harsh and grating to my ear, because I never could forget how nearly parallel our cases were.

"What's this?" said Wells, changing the subject, as I thought considerably, if not prudentially,—"*what's this* I hear about a funeral sermon to be preached upon the gunpowder Tom? Mrs. Sniggs has been at the Rectory talking some nonsense to Mrs. Wells, upon whom she has foisted herself only upon this pretence.—I shall preach no funeral sermon, unless you wish it; and as to a dirge, I declare, till the woman told my wife that it was meant in earnest, I thought it was a joke of Sniggs's."

Wells, as I have already recorded, had found out a great deal more upon the subject of the dancing-master than I had

ever intended to escape from the sanctum of Ashmead, but as I had decided upon the course I should take with regard to the piece of underhanded tom-foolery now on the *tapis*, I allowed him to anathematize duly, and in the most orthodox manner, all manner and kinds of persons who should attempt to desecrate the parish church of Blissford by such an unseemly melody—quite aware that, after a brief communication with Mr. Kittington, the dreadful sacrilege would most assuredly not be committed.

I was not disappointed in my expectations of Mr. Kittington—in less than half an hour after the termination of my dialogue with Wells, I received a note from him, couched in the most gentlemanly and respectful terms; in which, after apologizing for taking the liberty of troubling me with such an appeal, he expressed, most reluctantly, as he admitted, a disbelief that I had made the extraordinary application about his performance at the church, or that I had been a party to Miss Falwasser's visit to his mother's house, after the very peculiar conversation which had previously passed between us. This was exactly what I anticipated and what I wished; and I answered his note by telling him that I would call upon him at eight o'clock in the evening, a time at which I could easily walk down to the village—(I beg pardon, *town*)—without observation, and express to him personally, much better than in writing, the real state of the case; for although Kate deserved no great forbearance at *my* hands or those of Harriet, still I did not like to put upon record, even in a note which I felt sure would never see the light, the duplicity and dexterity of one so young, so artful, and deceptive.

When Mr. and Mrs. Nubley—who, bating their drapery, reminded me mightily of Adam and Eve before the fall,—came mooning unto the house—thanks to Miss Kate Falwasser for the phrase:—I ventured to take the dear original aside, and ask him where he had been during the early part of the day?

"Why," said Nubley—"we have been—eh, been—to Chittagong—over the grounds—into the house—brute of a man that Thompson—eh?"

"Yes," said I, "but you need not have told him so, my dear sir."

"Me!" said Nubley, stubbling his chin—"I tell him so! La bless you—not I—no—we were the greatest possible friends—odd girls the nieces and cousin!—he! he! he!"—and then in an under-tone, "*what makes him look so glum, I wonder?*"

"Why, my dear sir," said I, "Captain Thompson has been here to look after you—and failing of finding *you*, has fastened all your faults upon me—he says you abused him and the whole family."

"That's a fib, Gilbert," said Nubley—"I praised them, every one of them—beasts as they are: no—I said nothing offensive I know. Mrs. N. said something about them, I forget what—which seemed to vex one of them—but I—la!—I praised them, I tell you—eh?—*I wonder what Gilbert is at now?*"

This last surmise was expressed in a tone nearly as loud as all his previous protestations of politeness to the Thompsons.

"Why," said I, "my dear sir, I do not think you are aware of the only failing I can discover in your character, —I mean that of thinking aloud——"

"Ah!" said Nubley,—"talking to myself what I think?—that's it.—I believe I do—my wife has not that failing.—Poor thing! she talks to everybody else and never thinks at all—I hope she does not hear me—eh?—as for that Thompson, he is—between ourselves—no better than he should be—umh—few of us are."

"Those, as I understood," said I, "were precisely the words you used to one of the young ladies."

"Ah!" said Nubley—"I thought—I know I *thought* so—very strange—eh? Chi—chi—he does not know what that means."

Whether I did or did not comprehend these two very significant monosyllables, I found it was no manner of use endeavouring to persuade Nubley that this principle of wearing a window in his breast was not altogether safe in the world, and therefore I pooh-pooh'd off his inquiry as to the nature of the visit of Thompson to Ashmead, resolving to do my

duty by Cuthbert's venerable and unsophisticated partner, should it eventually be considered necessary to carry the matter into the field.

Then came dinner—and, to my delight, Harriet, for the first time since her confinement, took her place at the table—and she looked so nice and so pretty, that I could not help casting my eyes upon Wells and Fanny, who dined with us, and saying to myself, “Well, I don't care upon what principle you marry your daughters: if all of them turn out like the one I have secured to myself, the system will do no harm to anybody”—and then I felt a kind of chuckling satisfaction that Merman was not to have Fanny as a wife—and then I drank a glass of wine with Harriet—and she looked placid and pleased—and Kate seemed a little subdued—and Jane began, as I thought, to look quite pretty. The ladies retired, and in order to fulfil my promised engagement to Mr. Kittington, I begged my reverend father-in-law, if I should be detained beyond “coffee time,” to take charge of the fair flock and give them the advantages of his society till I should return—and in the meanwhile to be kind enough to exert his influence over Kate to abandon her intention of attending the funeral—Jane having already more than half agreed that it would be infinitely more agreeable to her feelings to abstain from a show of grief very unusual, and not at all in accordance with her own notions of real sorrow for the loss of so near a relation.

Away I went—and as what occurred during my interview with Mr. Kittington will transpire in my notes of the conversation which took place on my return to Ashmead—the particulars may be spared here: suffice it to say—I saw him—conversed with him—explained my conduct in the affair—was perfectly satisfied with his, and came home.

Our conversation was not long—but it confirmed all my suspicions as to Miss Falwasser—she had mentioned *my* name as the person anxious for the solemn music, and added an invitation to Kittington—whom she was sure I should be anxious to see at Ashmead in order to express my personal thanks for his attention to my wishes. The course of proceeding upon which we resolved will presently appear, and I took my leave, requesting permission to make my *adieu* to

the old lady and her daughter, whom I felt perfectly convinced had been kept by their honourable high-minded relation in perfect ignorance of Kitty's "juvenile indiscretions." I esteem this family, and will show that I do, if ever the opportunity occurs; although I admit that their own domestic affection and respectability are calculated in some degree to decrease my estimate of the son's forbearance with regard to Miss Falwasser, whose manners and qualifications, even if more matured, could have but little attraction to a young man accustomed to a tranquillity and comfort which she, poor wild child, could neither understand nor enjoy.

When I arrived at home I found Wells in the drawing-room acting upon my request, arguing seriously with Kate on the injudiciousness of subjecting herself to a public exhibition of sorrow at her brother's funeral; but I found his eloquence had been exercised in vain; she was crying, and answering his argument by merely reiterating the words "dear Tom"—"dear pappy," "dear boy,"—"what shall I do?"—"I *will* go,"—"I will see the last of him."—This was clearly a resolution borrowed in words from her maid.

Revenons à nos moutons—"What," said I,—"cannot the Rector succeed better than I in dissuading you from this sacrifice, Kitty?"

"No, uncle, no,"—sobbed she,— "let me go—pray let me go." Harriet, who remained up—bless her!—exhibited certain symptoms of disgust; and Jane, who it appeared had agreed to give up the point if Kate would do the same, clung to the knee of my wife as she sat on the footstool beside her.

"Oh," continued Kitty, "everything reminds me of him—I could not rest—oh!" This touch of the sentimental was particularly odious to me—knowing the genuine bent of her mind.

"I have been this very day," continued she, still sobbing, "to look at the copper where the odious cannon knocked his dear little nose—poor boy!"

This was too much for Wells, who, after uttering—"Umph!" jumped up from his chair and walked to the fire.

"I see," said the Rector, endeavouring to stifle a laugh at this last display, "I have no chance of succeeding—so you must go."

"Ah!" said Kate, "now I am happy—I never *was* at a funeral." Harriet gave me a look: the mixture of the sororial feeling with that of curiosity was food for an additional reflection upon Kate's character. "I would not be absent for the world." This was given pathetically, and somewhat soliloquisingly.

"I find," said I, addressing myself to Wells, "we shall not have the music, after all."

"What!" cried Kate.

"Why?" said Wells.

"Mr. Kittington has told me," said I, "that he is unavoidably obliged to go to Winchester to-morrow early in the morning, and cannot be back till Saturday."

"Mr. Kittington going to Winchester!" said Kate. I should like some eminent painter to have seen the expression of my wife's countenance when Kate asked that question.

"Yes," said I, "on business."

"How do you know, uncle?" said Kate.

"Why," said I, "as you had told him I should feel obliged by his performance——"

Here Kate's white neck and bosom became rather reddish.

"—— He thought it necessary to let me know why he could not do as I wished."

"You wished?" said Wells.

Redder still,

"Yes," said I; "as I wished, and as Kate told him I wished."

"Oh!" said Wells, "I did not understand."

Kate did, and gave me a look of gratitude for saving her from the exposure, which somewhat astounded me, and perfectly electrified my poor Harriet.

"However," I continued, "as it is, that part of the ceremony must be dispensed with, and perhaps all for the best. I think, except upon important occasions, I mean occasions which interest other people besides those immediately connected with the deceased, all superfluous ceremonies are best avoided."

"Perhaps you are right, dear uncle," said Kate, in a tone which sufficiently expressed her sense of my kindness in sparing her, "perhaps we had better not go."

"What!" said Harriet, who could not resist the gratification of giving her one hit; "you think a funeral without music must be exceedingly dull?"

"No, aunt," said Kate; "but I——"

"I know," said I, in order to put an end to what I feared would not otherwise end agreeably; "Kitty sees the good sense of the Rector's arguments."

"Yes, that's it, uncle," said Kate, and brightening up from all the humidity of tears into a sunshine of eyes directed specially at Harriet, "and I sha'n't go. Jane may do as she likes."

"I never wished to go, dear," said Jane.

"Don't dear me, Miss Jane," replied Kate, every vestige of grief having disappeared from her countenance, which was now animated with anger. "You may do as you like; but I *do* think Mr. Kittington's conduct, considering *how* much he has been noticed here, is extremely impudent—that I must say—and very unfeeling, and so I shall let pappy know." The curious telegraphing which went on after this impassioned speech convinced me that nobody present was out of the secret of what had passed between the young lady and the dancing-master, not even excepting Jane, as I fancied. The *roulade* of eyes was curious; mine, however, were principally fixed on Harriet's: I wanted to see how she bore this last *coup* of Miss Kitty's.

"But business," said I.

"What business," said Kate, in the most animated tone, "can be of sufficient importance to prevent his doing what we wished? I always thought he was a *spooney*."

This burst of unrequited love nearly set us all into what would have been a most unseemly roar of laughter on the eve of a family funeral, but upon *me*, I admit, it had the most ridiculous effect possible. The gradual transition from the deepest grief to the moderated sorrow, the considerate feeling as to the attendance on the following morning, the defection of Kittington, his plea of business, and thence the violent conclusion at which she arrived, couched in the strongest terms, culled doubtless from the vocabulary of Montpelier, were very nearly too much for me: however, we all contrived not to take any particular notice of the

climax of her speech, till Wells, with the most perfect gravity, and as if making no reference whatever to what had passed, said,

"I am glad, my dear Kitty, that you see the matter in its proper light, and give up attending the ceremony in the morning."

"I would not go," said Kate, "if you were to give me a hundred pounds: after pappy's civilities, and kindness, and after—but I don't care—and I won't talk about it. Jane may go if she likes, but I won't." And having burst into a flood of tears, in the production of which grief bore no part, the amiable girl literally rushed out of the room.

"Hadn't I better go to her?" said Jane, rising from the little footstool on which she was sitting.

"As you please, Jane," said Harriet.

And so Jane pleased to go; but as great things invariably turn upon little ones, except, perhaps, in mechanics, I saw in a moment, by the use of the word "*her*" with a sort of peculiar but undefinable emphasis, that the sisters were "two." Jane had thought over the difference of treatment she experienced with us when she shared—at least—the affection of the family with Kitty, from that which she was destined to at Montpelier, where Kitty was everything, and she nothing; but what made both Harriet and myself uncomfortable upon this point—for we had talked it over *tête-à-tête*—was, the certainty of giving the direst offence to Cuthbert if we acceded to that which had become something more than an implied desire on the part of Jenny to remain at Ashmead when Kate returned to Bath.

It is needless to note what Harriet and I said about Kitty and Jane, and the abrupt refusal of the former to attend the funeral. I rejoiced in the result, although we knew perfectly well the cause to which it was attributable; but I certainly had a difficulty in keeping from my dear domestic wife, especially now that we were more together in what might be called confidentiality, the history of the Thompsonian visit, which remained to be settled. This was to me of no great moment, except as I feared that Nubley might, either consciously or unconsciously, let out

the secret. To my great delight—I ought, I believe, to beg pardon for my want of gallantry and compassion—Mrs. Nubley was seriously afflicted with toothache, which kept her *hors de combat* in her room, as soon as ever what she called “the evening cold—he! he! he!”—came on; a circumstance which reminded me of a letter I had recently seen from a very gallant officer, a son of one of my earliest friends, who, having been shot through both cheeks just under the ear, wrote to his father that he had received a severe wound, which rendered him a living anomaly, inasmuch as whenever “he wanted to speak, he was obliged to *hold his jaw*.” This term, applied to a lady, *might* sound coarse; but I admit the absence of what I called Mrs. Nubley’s “peahenism” afforded me a delightful relief.

There is, however, a time for all things. Harriet looks tired—dear girl, it is quite natural she should; I am only too happy she has borne up so well.

“Come, dearest,” say I, “lean upon my arm—let me lead you to your room.”

“Thanks, Gilbert,” says the good, kind-hearted girl.

She leans upon my arm—her father kisses her, and gives me a look which indicates—“as Fanny is to sleep here—let us have some brandy and water, clerically weak but comfortably hot, before I start;” for Wells is a man who prefers the comfort of his servants and his horses to his own, and means to walk down to the Rectory to-night. I nod and telegraph him to ring the bell, whereupon Fanny says—

“Oh! Harriet, I am coming too.”

Whereunto I reply—“You have no candle.”

I take my Harriet to the door of her room, where Foxcroft is waiting for her, and I give her a kiss—a parting one—for the present. So far so good; then I return to Wells, and, as he *will* have a glass—or it may be two, as it is exceedingly cold—I *must* join him. The compulsion is not so painful.

It begins to snow; he cannot well go till it holds up.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE funeral is over : Sniggs and his assistant and myself were the only mourners. Wells read the service with as much energy as his feelings, which were, in truth, more excited than I had anticipated, would permit. I waited, with a melancholy patience, to see the earth piled on the coffin ; and while the sad work was going on, and just as the last shovelful, which hid the object from my sight, had been thrown into the grave, a woman, the wife of one of the smaller tradesmen of the place, exclaimed, close to my ear—

“ Ah, poor little fellow ! if you had had a father or mother to take care of you, you would not be there now.”

This was particularly gratifying, no doubt, under all the circumstances, for it not only spoke a reproach which I felt perfectly conscious that I did not deserve, but it proved to me that the opinion generally prevalent amongst the Blissford public was decidedly unfavourable to my tenderness of disposition and humanity of character, as well as those of my poor, dear, kind-hearted Harriet. Nor was this all ; for the moment the woman uttered the words, I almost unconsciously appealed with my eyes to Sniggs, who was standing a little in the rear, and saw him give his assistant a nudge, accompanied by a twitch of his nose, which I held to be indicative of his perfect agreement in her *dictum*, although I could not help thinking it might have applied more particularly and personally to himself than to me.

Upon my return home I found, as I had indeed expected, Kitty performing an extravaganza of grief, while Jane, deeply sorrowful, convinced me by the quiet sadness of her countenance and manner that she had—

“ That within which passeth show.”

I gave them an account of the ceremony, at the termination of which detail Kitty sobbed out, “ Then there really was no music after all ? ” A question which, from the way it

was put, implied to my understanding a lurking belief on the part of the young lady that my previous statement of the inability of her favourite professor to attend, was not perfectly true. Harriet and I exchanged looks, but nothing was said. The next question which was to be discussed and decided, was the return of the young ladies to Montpelier, which they said, and Sniggs evidently thought, was to be effected under his care and tutelage. There was a sort of worrying anxiety about Kate to stay with us for a day or two longer than Cuthbert had prescribed, and an evident anxiety on the part of poor Jenny to stay with us altogether; but I could not see any possible method of gratifying her wish, in opposition to the mandate of her father-in-law, and therefore, upon my long-established and frequently-acted-upon principle of waiting a little to see what would happen, I thought the best plan would be to postpone the consideration of it for a day or two, or even until called to it by a summons from Sniggs, who would of course write to Cuthbert a detailed account of the funeral, and receive his further commands; and with whose official precedence I had no inclination whatever to meddle. I merely asked Kitty, after her immoderate grief was somewhat calmed, and she had satisfied herself by one or two glances at the looking-glass that if she continued crying any longer she would decrease the general beauty of her countenance, whether Cuthbert had fixed any particular day for their return to Bath?

"No," said Kate, "not exactly to a day; and I should like to stop with dear aunt for a day or two, because, now that poor dear Tom is buried, we may go down and see Fanny and Bessy at their own house."

"Bessy," said Harriet, with a look, "will not be back for a week or ten days." She might have added, "Nor for a month, if you stay here so long."

"Gurney," said Nubley, "I want five minutes' talk with you—eh?—can't guess what I want—eh? Will you come down-stairs?—don't want my wife in the way."

"I am at your service," said I.

"Will Mr. Sniggs come here to-day?" said Kate.

"Upon my word," replied I, "I do not know."

"But did you ask him?" said the girl, with a pertness which startled me.

"I cannot say I did," I replied: "it did not appear to me that the graveside of so near a connexion as your brother was a very fitting place for giving an invitation; besides, Mr. Sniggs has been so long in the habit of coming here whenever he pleases, and staying as long as he likes, that I hardly think an invitation at any time necessary."

"Yes," said Kate, tossing her head, and looking very, very impudent, "he used to come constantly to see dear pappy when *he* was here."

"Come," said Nubley, who seemed full of something in the way of confidential communication; and I was glad he did, for with all my resolution, I am not quite certain that I could have screwed myself to the task of giving the impertinent brat a civil answer—pretty as she was, and, by Jove! I must confess that goes a great way as a qualification.

Down we went, and when we entered my library, Nubley, desiring me to be seated, began, as was always his custom to walk about the room, stubbling his chin, and occasionally leaning on the mantel-shelf and staring vacantly at himself in the glass. It is impossible to describe in writing the effect of the dialogue without contriving to mark all of that which he thought he did *not* utter, in contradistinction to that which he meant to meet my ear. I have found it difficult in noting down his former conversations to do this without breaking in upon the "thread of the discourse;" the best way will be to underscore—or, as the printers would say, put in italics his muttered *thoughts*, of the utterance of which he was himself wholly unconscious; and thus, I think, a continuous course may be carried on without otherwise pointing out the difference between those and the words which he really meant should be heard.

"Gilbert," said he, "I have been thinking all night about this man Thompson, and his conduct. I don't see—eh?—why—not a bit—why you should—eh take up my quarrel—*I think that will startle him*—eh Gilbert?"

"My dear sir," said I, "if he follow up his visit, I must pursue the line I have taken. Why should you, wholly unconscious of affronting him, be, at your time of life, subjected to a meeting of such a kind with such——"

"Why not?" said Nubley. "I have fought before, and hit my man—and *an infernal stew I was in*—knocked him over—eh?—hit him in the pope's eye—eh?—*deuced glad I hadn't killed him*—why shouldn't I fight my own battles?"

"Because I have taken your place," said I. "The thing is now irrevocable."

"*He sha'n't go out with him though*—Irrevocable is it?" said Nubley. "Now look ye—eh?—don't you see—you have got a charming young wife—and you love her;—I have a wife, too, you'd say—*strange body*—but I have no child—*silly woman*—*no chance of having one now*.—Well—you have—I am twice as old as you, and more—my going out with *him*, or out of the world is nothing—*besides the fellow may miss me*—eh?—so when he sends his man here, refer him to *me*."

"Well," said I, having heard all, "we'll see about it, my dear sir. I doubt the matter's being carried any further, unless the Captain presumes upon his visit here to spread any reports prejudicial to either of our characters."

"Spread!" said Nubley; "how should he spread reports? They are not upon speaking terms with anybody in the place. And as for the nieces and cousins—*nieces, indeed—he! he!*—not that I mean, dear Gurney, to disparage the ladies—eh?—*my inquisitive wife has found out all about 'em*—*nieces!—nieces!—ha! ha! ha!*—no but—they really are fine women—very handsome women—two or three nieces and a cousin a piece—*three! ha! ha! ha!*—but—eh?—that's no reason why we are to be bullied."

"Assuredly not," said I: "but as to your rent, have you——"

"Not a pice," said Nubley, "not a cownie—gad! he must pay his rent before I go out with him—clear off—eh!—else—what—if I kill *him* I can't recover of anybody else!"

"No," said I, "recovery after death, in his case, would be as improbable as in most others."

"*Pretty girl he second—he! he!*—They seem lively

young women," said Nubley, "very—eh?—*he ! he ! he ! nonsense !*—my wife hates them—detests them—*the old goose is jealous*—eh?—that's hard—I have my notions about 'em—eh?—but then—women are always hard upon women.—*His wife hates Kitty Falwasser worse than pyson* (so he pronounced the word.)—However, mark, Gilbert—I insist upon it that you take no step—eh?—you understand—in this Thompson business without first speaking to me—*I'll take care and watch so that you sha'n't*—eh?—D'ye understand me?—*He's a good-hearted fellow, and his brother is an ass.* I beg, however, to thank you for what you have done—from my heart—eh?—I do—*he shall lose nothing by that ;*—but remember—when that 'Monsieur Tonson comes again,' let me know—*I dare say he didn't think I had ever read that story*—eh?—don't you see?"

"Yes," said I—and hear, too, thought I;—"you shall be obeyed to the letter." And I own I was greatly overcome, not to say surprised, to find so much sterling good in one who, whatever respect for his age and long connexion with my brother I might have felt, I certainly did not rank in that class of men to which, by his own inadvertent and unconscious expression of feeling and principle, he really belonged, till the development of this affair. I took up the cudgels for Nubley rather on account of his age and relative position to Cuthbert than for any other reason; but the little dialogue—if that may be so called—in which a third set of thoughts and opinions was developed, had raised the eccentric old gentleman very considerably in my estimation; nor was it unpleasant to me, deserted as it appeared I was by my nearest and only living relation, to find that the sentiments of his oldest friend and long-continued partner were evidently favourable to me.

Shortly after our conversation, I received a note from Sniggs, of which the following is a copy:—

"Dear Sir,

"I did not like to trespass on you immediately after the melancholy ceremony of this morning to ask you whether you proposed to write, by this evening's post, to Mr. Cuthbert Gurney, or whether I should convey any communication

in the letter which I shall despatch to him, in conformity with his directions.

"I should have gone up to Ashmead to ask you this question, but my anxiety not to intrude at such a season hindered me. May I hope that Mrs. Gurney and the dear young ladies are as well as we have a right to expect them to be? Will you be good enough to ask them if they have anything to send?"

"Yours, dear sir, faithfully,

"S. SNIGGS.

"My boy waits your answer."

I could not stand this. It would have been perfectly impossible for me to have been ordinarily civil if I had condescended to enter upon anything like a detailed reply to what struck me as the grossest insult that had yet been offered to me—whether intentional or not, I did not then take time to consider—but resolved, at all events, not to be betrayed into an angry correspondence, and, equally averse from maintaining a civil one, I merely desired the servant to send my compliments, and say there was no answer.

I had, however, no sooner sent this message than I felt vexed, inasmuch as I had not given the girls an opportunity of writing to their father-in-law,—an omission, on my part, which I was quite sure would be magnified by Sniggs to Brandyball into a crime of the first magnitude. I therefore proceeded to the drawing-room, where the young ladies were, and informed them that if they wished to write to Montpelier, Mr. Sniggs would forward their communications under his cover.

"I think," said Kate, "Mr. Sniggs *might* have come up himself, considering——"

"He says," replied I, "that he did not wish to break in upon us on a day of mourning."

"It has been no great day of mourning with me," said Kate: "nothing like what it would have been if I had gone to the funeral, and so I shall tell pappy."

"Then," said I, my patience very rapidly wasting, "why did you not go, Miss Falwasser?"

"Oh!" said Kate, with more candour than wisdom, "I did not choose to go, because I saw I was to be spited; nothing was to be done that *I* wished; and I am sure I do not know who was to be studied, as Mrs. Brandyball said, if *I* was not."

"All I ask is," said I, with as much coolness as I could command, "whether you have anything to write to Montpelier."

"No, uncle," said Kate, "I shall write nothing; but when I get back I shall say a great deal. I know more about things that are going on than some folks think. I do, and——"

"And so do I, Miss Kate," said I; "therefore I must beg of you not to exhibit this sort of conduct in *my* house."

"In pappy's house you mean," said Kate, firing up: "dear me! as if I did not know all about *that*! Why, even my maid, Wilkins, knows the whole story."

"Pray," said I, again interrupting her; "let me have no reference to such authorities as the servants, when I am speaking to you upon matters of family interest."

"I am sure," said the angry girl, "I am not of *your* family, and so Mrs. Brandyball has told me and taught me; and as for ——"

"Oh, Kate, Kate, dear Kate?" said Jane, "do not go on talking so."

"Talking?" said Harriet: "she may talk if she pleases; but, Gilbert, send her back to school in the morning, when I hope an account of her conduct will induce your brother to order her some severe punishment."

"Thank you, my dear," said Kate, with the most impudent look at my poor wife; "but I am not going to be sent anywhere by *you*. When *I* choose to go, and Mr. Sniggs chooses to take me back, I shall go."

"Mr. Sniggs," said Nubley, who had witnessed this scene, struggling with a sort of convulsive effort to stop it, "Mr. Sniggs, my little dear, need not trouble himself about it; *I* will take charge of you and your sister to Bath the day after to-morrow—*little imp deserves to be whipped, and shall be if I prevail*. I cannot to-morrow—*deuce*

take Thompson!—but the day after we will make the journey.”

“I won’t go,” said Kate, bursting into tears.

“My little dear,” said Nubley, “you shall. You’ll forgive me, Mrs Gurney—*poor dear soul, I hope I sha’n’t frighten her*—eh?—you’ll forgive me; but I have been the friend and partner of Cuthbert Gurney for nearly forty years—and *lost a deuced deal of money by his stupidity*—yes—and have the highest regard for him. I want to go to Bath—not I, *I hate the white-bottome tea-kettle*—I want to go to Bath—eh?”

“Well,” said Kate, looking daggers at him, “then go to Bath; but I——”

“You shall go with me, my little dear—eh—*little devil*,” said Nubley. “Where’s the use of paying for two sets of horses?—I want to see your pappy, as you call him—eh—*no relation of her’s*—eh—and so I will take all the responsibility; and you may tell Sniggs—very gentlemanly man, my dear—*pill-gilding puppy*—eh—that he may write what he has to say; but that you and Jane—eh—*nice little quiet thing she would be if taken care of here*—eh—will go with me.”

“I sha’n’t sir,” said Kate: “my Pa——”

“Now don’t,” said Nubley, “don’t say you won’t, by-cause you will—eh—nothing is so unpleasant to look at, as a young lady in a passion—eh—*except an old one*.”

“I do not wish to go at all,” said Jane, clinging to Harriet.

“Then you may stay and be a beggar,” said Kate.

“Kate,” said my wife, with as much placidity as I could have hoped to see, “conduct and conversation like these are extremely unbecoming. Mr. Nubley is not only the oldest friend your father-in-law has, but has been, for a great number of years, intimately connected with him in business: surely you do not mean to prefer Mr. Sniggs, who has accidentally become acquainted with us from our living here, to a gentleman whose intimacy has existed with your family for such a length of time Consider——”

“I do consider,” said Kate; “and I am sure the kind-

ness of Mr. Sniggs to poor dear Tom"—and here a flood of tears by way of grief gave vent to feelings of a very different nature.

"Oh, he is a very good doctorer," said Nubley, "and means to be paid for his pains—eh—not to *speak of the cherry bounce*—eh—don't you see, my dear?—we all know his merits, and I mean to explain them all to your dear parent by proxy—eh—*that's a good joke!*—eh—don't you see? But why are we to waste twice the sum for post-horses in carrying you back to Bath, because you don't like to travel with *me*, I don't understand: as for Jenny, if she likes to stop, she shall, if Mrs. Gurney likes to keep her. I'll make her excuses."

"I *do* like to stop," said Jane, and burst into tears as her sister had just before done, but with this trifling difference, that hers were genuine.

"I am sure, Miss Jane," said Kate, "you must have some very particular reason for liking to stop."

"May-be I have," said Jane, in a tone of irritation and passion which I never had before observed in her: "but if I have, it is because I love my aunt and my uncle, and love quiet, and goodness, and peace."

"Ah!" said Kate, "you must love something else to prefer this dull hole to Bath."

"Whatever I love," said Jane, straining her eyes out of their sockets, "I am not in love with a dancing-master."

The world was at an end; nothing but main force hindered Kate from inflicting summary injustice upon her poor sister, who by this most unexpected denunciation had destroyed at a blow all the secrecy and mystery with which we had invested this curious attachment, and laid open an affair of the most unquestionable delicacy.

"Jane," said I, "don't talk in this way; a joke between yourselves is all very well, but——"

"Oh, uncle, no," said Jane, "it is no joke. I——"

"Jane, I'll kill you," said Kate, "I will—I'll tear your eyes out—I won't stop here a moment, that I won't, now I know they know it all: that's the reason my letters—but I won't speak—I won't stop—I will go—I'll drown myself, I will."

And out of the room rushed Kitty.

"Go after her, Harriet," said I; "soothe her—get rid of this joke—for joke it is. Jenny, you should not put your sister into these passions, you know her temper."

Harriet was really alarmed, and ran after the violently impassioned girl.

"I only spoke the truth," said Jane, "and Wilkins will tell you the same."

"A dancing-master!" said Nubley, "why she's a baby—eh—*tum-ti-ty-te-doodly-di—a dancing-master! well, if ever!—oh! if my old woman gets hold of this—eh—what! that little man that lives here, with the red hair and the pumps?*"

"Now," said I to Jane, wishing to get rid of this unfortunate *éclaircissement* as soon as possible, "go after Kate, and be kind to her, and say no more about this absurd thing. I wish you had not worried her about it—you *shall* stay with us, if you like, dear; but do not say anything more about this ridiculous story; go, there's a love."

"I will do whatever you wish, uncle," said Jane; "but I don't see why Kate should say that I wanted to stay here for anything but love of you and aunty. I am very sorry if you are vexed; for indeed, indeed, I am happier here than I can be anywhere else in the world." And she cried and clung round me, and only left me when by a *douce violence* I practically asserted my wish that she should go to her sister and Harriet.

I looked at Nubley, and I saw two tears roll down his pale furrowed cheeks: he was leaning on the chimney-piece as usual, unconsciously watching them trickling along, and he muttered, "*By heavens, if I am not shot to-morrow, I will settle all this!—eh?*"—turning to me, "that's a nice child, Gilbert, if we can keep her from being spoiled. I'll do what I say—I don't care a pice for the apothecary—I'll take Kitty with me, and with her a character for her pappy. What's the story about the dancing-master—eh?"

"Oh," said I, "a mere joke, I conclude."

"I don't know," said Nubley, and away went the chin to work; "there must be something in it—eh?—*he knows the*

whole story, but won't peach—good fellow, good fellow—eh—you don't believe it?"

"I never believe evil reports till I have very strong grounds," said I; "but **what** shall I do about Sniggs? I have said there was no answer to his note; but that will not, I think, under the circumstances, be satisfactory to Cuthbert."

"Oh!" said Nubley, "I will settle that; I'll send Galen a billet, not over *doux*, but just to tell him that if he will write his letter to Cuthbert as he proposes, I will save him all farther trouble as to the journey; and he may, to save postage, inform your most quiescent brother, that I shall be with him. Let's see, this is Friday—on Monday with the young ladies—*sha'n't let him into the secret of not taking Jane—eh—don't you see?—put his nose out of joint—a* very worthy man, Sniggs—*eh—beast—that's what I shall do; so, pen and ink—here they are—suppose my old woman won't be jealous of my travelling with Kate—I'll settle that—eh—have the maid inside—that will do—eh—perhaps that would be worse.* Now, then——"

And so to work went Nubley to give Sniggs his *congé*, & step he felt himself perfectly authorised to take, and I proceeded in search of Harriet, whom I found in attendance upon our young heroine, who, having been hystericked to a proper extent by her excited feelings, was in bed, refusing, however, the slightest reconciliation with Jane, and desiring to be left entirely to the care of her favourite Wilkins.

I held a brief communing with my wife, who, equally with myself, regretted the explosion, which had brought to our notice that which we meant never to have seen the light. Our only resource was to treat the matter as one of no kind of importance, and attribute Jane's recrimination to a girlish jest; a jest which, at all events, however, had better not have *écclatée* upon such a day. Our mutual resolution was to take no notice whatever of the allegation, and we hoped that before bed-time the sisters, who slept in the same room, might be so far reconciled, that, by our avoiding all recurrence to the matter, they might rest in quiet for the night.

I went back to Nubley, who showed me the letter he had

written to Sniggs, which was reasonable, sensible, and just and (as he did not write down his floating ideas) sufficiently civil: this was despatched, and we were just entering upon a conversation connected with Cuthbert's position relating to the Gorgon who had so strangely fascinated him, when a gentleman was announced to be in the morning-room, who wished to speak to me.

I told the servant I would be with him immediately, feeling sure that Captain Thompson had seized the very earliest moment—scarcely, it is true, compatible with decency—to send his friend to make some arrangement as to the insult he had received: it certainly was as soon after the melancholy ceremony to which he had so feelingly alluded, when he himself called, as might be expected; but I attributed this rapidity of movement to an anxious desire to put himself right which, as I have already said, I felt convinced was the main object of fixing a quarrel upon somebody; and I hastened down to meet the stranger, delighted beyond measure that Nubley—whose mind was not very excursive—was so much occupied in folding and sealing his letter to Sniggs, that he not only did not question the announcement of the servant, but actually did not hear it. “So far so good,” thought I; and away I went to give the hero the opportunity of throwing down the gauntlet.

When I entered the morning-room—scene of Thompson's late proceeding—I beheld a stout gentlemanly-looking man, evidently just off a journey, enveloped in a comfortable great-coat, who made a very respectful bow as I entered—the one which I did not much like, because, in modern chivalry, it is the fashion for a man to be in manner civil to you, proportionably to the seriousness of his determination to shoot you through the head if possible afterwards.

The moment I saw him a thought flashed into my mind, which, strange to say, had never entered it before—most strange under the circumstances—he would, of course, expect me to name a friend, with whom he could confer upon arrangements and details: as to apologizing to Captain Thompson, I should as soon have thought of suffering him to horsewhip me; and I declare that when I found myself *tête-à-tête* and *vis-à-vis* with my visiter, repentance,

which, in my case, generally came too late, filled my mind, that I had not thought of somebody to whom I could apply in such an emergency.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said the stranger, opening the parley, "for coming here to-day, understanding that there has been a funeral in the family, but my business admits of no delay."

"Will you do me the favour to be seated, sir?" said I.

"No, sir," said the strange gentleman, "my business will be short. I believe you know Captain Thompson?"

"I have seen him here a day or two since," said I, "and am therefore prepared for the nature of your visit."

"Mr. Nubley is, I believe, here?" said the strange gentleman.

"He is," said I; "but as I have already apprised Captain Thompson that the whole of the affair is transferred, at my desire, to myself, I alone am responsible, and you will therefore consider me as the principal in the business."

"Well, sir," said the strange gentleman, "I suppose you have heard some extremely unfavourable reports of the Captain since he has been living here?"

"Oh, dear no!" said I; "I have heard nothing against his character: our families have never been on visiting terms but still—I——"

"I merely mean to ask, sir," said the stranger, "whether you are able to substantiate any imputation against his character?"

"No," said I; "none that could possibly interfere with my readiness to treat him as a gentleman ought to be treated, and meet him whenever he chooses."

"What I first wanted to know is," said the stranger, "has he given Mr. Nubley satisfaction?"

"There was no necessity for that," said I, "because, in the first place, he called upon Mr. Nubley, and, in the second, I have taken the affair upon myself."

"You see, sir," said the strange gentleman, "our way of doing business is going at once to the point. I have come down from London post, in order to be here to day, for, from the communication which had reached town, it seemed that time pressed——"

"I presume, sir," said I, "that I am speaking to an officer?"

"Yes, sir," said the strange gentleman, "you are; and the urgency of the case rendered it necessary that I should be here as early as possible."

"Well, sir," said I, "I think we may cut this matter short—my line is determined upon—I am prepared to meet your friend to-morrow morning at any hour you please, for I am resolved that Mr. Nubley shall hear nothing of the affair till it is over."

"There is no occasion, sir," said the strange gentleman, "for meeting my friend, for I have left him snug at Chittagong Lodge, looking after the ladies."

"Well, but," said I, "surely after what Captain Thompson has done in the matter, he could spare half-an-hour from his nieces and cousins."

"Nieces and cousins!" said the strange gentleman: "why, Lord bless your soul, sir! they are no more his nieces and cousins than they are yours. You know what sort of people they are."

"Sir," said I, "I believe the grounds of our misunderstanding were some inadvertent expressions on the part of my friend Mr. Nubley; but I really profess to know nothing of the ladies, and would rather, if you please, confine myself to the case in point."

"What," said my visiter, "the furniture and the wines?"

"Sir," said I, "if you have come here to insult me, and to trifle with my feelings on a day especially and at a season when an outrage of this sort must naturally be more deeply felt, and will be more decidedly resented, say so. I tell you, sir, that I am ready to meet Captain Thompson at any time and place you will please to appoint, and I will be there with a friend, which probably will cut our business short."

"Meet Captain Thompson, sir!" said my friend; "I fancy there is some mistake in this. I would give fifty pounds to meet Captain Thompson, as you call him——"

"——I call him, sir!" said I.

"Yes, sir," said my friend, "Captain Thompson of Chittagong Lodge, in the parish of Blissford, county of Southampton, is in London Jimmy Dabbs, *alias* the Honourable

Wilmington Skimminggrove, *alias* Bluff Jim, *alias* Teddy the tight one, *alias* etcetera, etcetera."

"I am in a dream!" said I.

"Lord bless you, sir!" said my visiter; "I wanted to see Mr. Nubley about the damage done to his house—we came down after Dabbs about lots of London swindling—never could find him for the last six months—missed him completely—and now he has got off—somebody has put him up—tipped him the office—and in course we have no right to keep the ladies in custody, but we have taken leave just to beg them to stop for a little, and——"

"This is most extraordinary!" said I, "I thought I was speaking to an officer who——"

"—So you are, sir," said my most respectable *friend*, "to a Bow-street officer, who has been rather thrown out in the chase after Jimmy; and what I came here for was, to know if Mr. Nubley, the gentleman who let him the house, is aware of all that has happened."

"He was there yesterday," said I.

"Did he look at his wine-cellars?" said my friend.

"There could have been no particular necessity for his doing that," said I, "for the cellar-door was walled up."

"Never mind," said my friend in the great-coat, "the wall has been pulled down since, and, as I believe, there arn't three dozen of drinkable liquor in the whole place."

"This," said I, "alters the whole business. Do me the favour to wait a moment—I'll go and fetch Mr. Nubley. The affair I had taken upon myself was of a totally different nature from this. I have no objection to his being a principal here, although I should have decidedly opposed his standing forward in the other case."

Up-stairs I went—endeavoured as much as possible to enlighten dear Nubley upon the actual state of affairs, and then brought him down to the morning-room, where he found my worthy guest, whose extremely gentlemanly manner and civilized conduct had led me into the error, that I was speaking to a man in a much higher rank in life.

It took but little time to make Nubley understand the extent of his misfortunes: at first his horror was extreme, for through the foggiess of his mind, which uniformly prevailed

until he had warmed away the mist, he, on the first blush of the business, fancied that somebody had procured the interference of the police to stop the hostile meeting for which he had fully prepared himself. But, alas! the chance of meeting Captain Thompson, *alias* Jimmy Dabbs, *alias* the Honourable Wilmington Skimminggrove, *alias* Bluff Jim, *alias* Teddy the tight one, unless at the Old Bailey, was but small.

And oh! to hear Nubley's lamentations over his London Particular Madeira, Gordon Duff and Bean's own, bought by himself in their hospitable mansion, or rather palace, in the Rua das Esmeralda, at Funchal—four pipes, with two quarter pipes to fill up ullage—all gone—his delicious Paxton Port—the entire emptied, carried off in detail, under the darkness of the night, and the Captain gone too—fled—leaving nothing but his baggage behind him, and *that* of a nature not detainable by law. As for the duel, it was a flea-bite to this damage, which was very extensive, and which must have been managed with consummate dexterity by the gentleman who, as a set-off for his wholesale robbery, had threatened the sufferer with a horse-whipping. Nubley bore the intelligence, however, manfully, and determined to proceed with the officer to Chittagong, to examine into the particulars of the case: his first stipulation, however, was, that the ladies should be released, accompanied with a promise, that if they had not the means of going, he would pay their passage to town by the first conveyance.

"A woman," said Nubley, "never should suffer for the ill-doings of a man to whom she is attached—eh?—No—a woman's heart is always kind—and if once interested—eh?—clings to the object of her affections through right and wrong;—not from bad principle, but because he teaches her to believe him right—eh?—*I have been young myself.—Poor things! they are pretty—What will they do now?—eh?—send them off—let them go before I get there—eh? I should make a fool of myself, and a crying old man is a stupid sight.*"—Then, unconscious, as usual, of these ejaculations, which the Bow-street officer "very much applauded," as believing them addressed to himself, the kind-hearted "old man" turned to me, and said, "Now, Gilbert,

I can start for Bath in the morning with that young Jezebel; and, Gilbert my boy! I'll see you righted." He squeezed my hand, picked his chin, and said to himself—"I will, by Jove!"

I can hardly describe my sensations when I saw Nubley preparing to follow the officer, who, in pursuance of his desire at all events to remove the unfortunate females out of his sight before he arrived, preceded him. The extraordinary extrication from a very disagreeable affair—the enlightenment as to the Captain's character, to whom he had incautiously let his house—and the sudden advocacy of my case with Cuthbert which he had adopted, seemed really too many happy incidents in my life to occur in one day, and that a day the least likely in the whole calendar to produce anything to me and mine but sorrow and lamentation.

When the dear old man—and how I reproached myself with my former distaste of his peculiarities, and my then too ready disposition to laugh at his infirmities!—had taken his departure, it was, I confess, something exciting and almost delightful to tell my dear Harriet the whole history of what had occurred. Of course she reproached me not only for exposing myself to the vengeance of Jimmy Dabbs, but for having concealed the circumstances connected with so important an event from her. All these little temporary differences, existing more in love than anger, I contrived effectually to soothe, and found that Kate, overcome by excitement, had fallen into a slumber,—not, however, before she had written a note to Mr. Sniggs, which her little short-legged minister, Wilkins, had carried down to his house; and that Jane, tired of endeavouring in vain to get forgiven for the rash allusion to the dancing-master, had returned with Harriet to the boudoir, expressing in the strongest terms her anxiety to remain where she was.

Mrs. Nubley, during these days of storm, still remained in her own room. A *ci-devant* beauty, especially a *blonde*, who either forgets the march of time, or does not perceive the advance of age, cannot bear to "show" after a pulling down of any sort; and a cold, with a tendency to tooth-ache, and the slightest suspicion of a swelled face, kept the dear simpleton—much to my delight—still an

inmate of her chamber—of her bed, I believe. Harriet usually devoted two or three of her morning hours to her, and after tea remained with her till she was ready for sleep, but my belief is, that if she had been as brisk and as screeching as usual, Nubley's own natural impulses would never have had fair play; for although she neither had the power nor probably the inclination to direct his proceedings, the constant state of feverish irritation in which her absurdities kept him, would have most seriously operated in curdling the milk of human kindness, of which, to my joy and, I admit, to my surprise, I found him full.

It was about half-past three o'clock, when I was somewhat surprised, after what had previously occurred, at perceiving Mr. Sniggs striding along the drive from the Lodge, with a look of seriousness and importance in his face well suited to his vocation and the circumstances of the morning: I heard his ring at the bell—heard his admission into the house; but heard nothing by way of announcement. I certainly had the curiosity to open my door and look at what was going on, and all I perceived was, that as soon as he had reached the bottom of the staircase, Wilkins, Kate's maid, was ready to receive and conduct him to Kate's room, whence I inferred that she had felt it necessary to summon him to her presence, but whether in his medical capacity, or as her counsellor and secretary, I could not of course decide. I thought it, however, my duty to let Harriet know what was going on; and she accordingly, much against her will, but from a sense of what was due to the girl and herself, proceeded to the apartment. Nothing, I dare say, could have been more disagreeable to Kate, or, if truth were known, to Sniggs himself, for he had taken his line and seemed resolved to maintain it. Nubley's note had unquestionably disconcerted him, for whatever Miss Kitty's own view of the case might be, Sniggs could by no means abstract her from Ashmead against our will and command, both of which I felt myself justified to enforce under such a sanction as that of Cuthbert's oldest friend and partner.

"I hope," said Harriet, as she entered the room, "that Kitty is not ill enough to require your professional attendance, Mr. Sniggs?"

"No, ma'am, no," said Sniggs.

—"I'm sure I *am*," said Kate, "I am very ill indeed."

"If I had thought so, my dear," said Harriet, "I should have been too ready to send for Mr. Sniggs——"

—"Thank you," said Kate, "but I was quite able to send for him myself—Pappy put me under his care—and I have a great deal to say to him to say to Pappy——"

—"Then," said Harriet, "I suppose I may leave you?——"

"Why," said Sniggs, with that peculiar screw of his eyebrows, which indicated a sort of uncertain determination, if such a feeling may be said to exist—"I really—I am sure you will forgive me, Mrs. Gurney—but I think perhaps—it *would* be better—I know that—eh?——"

—"Oh, I am too glad to leave her in such good hands," said Harriet—"all that I thought was, that she might wish me to be with her."

"I think not," added Sangrado, with an expression of countenance meant to convey the notion that although he was humouring Kitty, he was furthering the interests of the family—"young folks *have* their whims."

Harriet behaved extremely well, and left the apothecary and his patient to themselves with a complacency almost miraculous; her disgust at Kate's conduct, by no means diminished by the airs she had given herself—nor her esteem for Mr. Sniggs considerably increased by the sort of patronising air of protection which he had thought proper to assume as regarded the young lady.

During the period in which the interesting dialogue between Kitty and her medical or political adviser was in progress, poor dear Nubley had satisfied himself of the entire truth of his having been most extensively swindled by Jimmy Dabbs, alias Captain Thompson, and moreover convinced by ocular demonstration of the absence, without leave, of his wine and sundry others of his moveables; but, strange to say—one *does* meet with oddities—and never existed upon the face of the earth a greater oddity than that very man: his mind—all abroad as it was—had received a new impulse by the sense he entertained of the cruel persecu-

tions which he saw and felt conscious that I was undergoing, and his own loss, and the demolition and deterioration of his property, scarcely seemed to affect him, although at any other time, and if his wife had been well enough to keep him up to a proper pitch of irritation, he would have been in a violent state of excitement—but no—he made only a short stay on the field of waste and destruction he had, as he said, ordered the gratuitous removal of the ladies to be secured—and under such really vexatious circumstances, when he came back in less than an hour, seemed to feel rather gratified and certainly very much soothed because the *soi-disant* Captain Thompson had been considerate enough to leave him the house and fixtures, which he could not very well have contrived to carry off.

Upon his return the worthy old gentleman came to Harriet and myself in her *boudoir* before he repaired to his lady-wife's room; Jane, who was excluded from the council holden by Sniggs and Kitty, being with us.

"Well," said he, "I have been what in my early days they would have called 'bamboozled;' I admit it—Thompson was neither military nor naval—nor, Gilbert, as you found, civil. *He! he! that's the best joke I've made for many a day*—eh—don't you see?—well—they've stolen my wine—when I say stolen, they have taken it away—my furniture is gone—eh—I *won't say too much*, or *they'll say I was a fool for leaving it*—but I don't care—I don't—no—eh—I don't—I *care more about you and yours*—eh—don't you think so?"

"You bear your loss with great philosophy," said Harriet.

"Philosophy!" exclaimed Nubley; "to be sure—eh—can't always be wise—*my fault*—I admit it—*hope they won't tell Mrs. N. I said so*—only you know—you need not say—eh—plausible man—what?—good-looking man—eh—*pretty girls the nieces, he! he! he!*—I thought the ladies rather suspicious—eh—odd—*Madeline, as he called her, was, he! he!*—but you know that—eh—I don't bother myself about such things—only just to speak—eh—I have

got possession of the house again—and so—eh—I'm all right—and besides all *that*, I have other matters to look after—eh?"

At this period a tap at the door—mark of subservient civility—produced the inevitable—except under very peculiar circumstances—"Come in," and lo and behold the once familiar Sniggs stood before us.

Jane instinctively drew nearer to Harriet as he approached.

"I have been talking to Miss Kate," said Galen, "as to the time when she would like me to take her and Miss Jane back to Bath, but—whether to-morrow, or the next day—or——"

"Why," said I, "Kate very recently expressed a wish to stay here for a day or two longer.

"Yes," said Sniggs, "that is the point—she wished to stay here till, as dispatches say, we receive further orders."

"All I can say," said I, "Is, that as long as she chooses to remain here we shall of course be happy in her presence—and——"

——"Why," said the apothecary, "I think she wishes to pass a day or two with *us* at our humble dwelling, if you have no objection—and as Mrs. Brandyball has written very kindly to Mrs. Snigg's, I was thinking——"

——"I'll save you all the trouble of thinking, sir," said Nubley, "and of acting upon this point—I mean to take Miss Falwasser back to Bath with *me* to-morrow—so you may spare yourself any further pains—*done him there—eh*, don't you see?—I have some very important matters to talk over with her father-in-law, who is my oldest friend, as I think you by this time in all probability know—so if you have anything to send—a *bill* I suppose—eh don't you see?—you can send it by me."

"Sir," said Sniggs, somewhat indignantly, "I really was not prepared for this curious repulse—I have been entrusted

——"Pooh, pooh!" said Nubley, "never mind that—you are a deucedly agreeable fellow and full of fun and all that—and I like you—*umph!*—*that is*—but my poor friend

Cuthbert Gurney is a mere baby—a little baby in leading strings—he wants looking after—eh?”

“I am sure,” said Sniggs, “during Mr. Cuthbert Gurney’s residence here I paid every attention to him, of which, as far as I am able to form a judgment, he is quite conscious—and as to the poor dear boy who is gone——”

“Yes,” said Nubley, making a face which the illustrious Liston could scarce emulate, “I know—*two bottles of cherry-bounce*—I know you did—however, sir, I must be permitted to act; write what you please to Mr. Gurney, and if you please tell him what I propose to do, but you will permit me to say that the young lady goes with *me*, and goes to-morrow—eh—don’t you see?—*That’s a finisher for him*—eh?”

“Of course, sir,” said Sniggs, evidently startled, “I can have no right to interfere——”

——“I know you haven’t” said Nubley, “therefore don’t—eh—*that’s plain sense anyhow*; I am going to my old friend and partner, and as I have already told you, to talk of matters of great importance, and I shall take back his daughter-in-law.”

“Daughters-in-law, I presume?” said Sniggs.

“You *do* presume, sir!” said Nubley; “eh—*that’s not so bad*—eh don’t you see? for I mean to take but one—Jenny shall stop here; we will save *her* at all events.”

“Am I to write this, sir?” said Sniggs.

“You may write what you please,” replied Nubley; “I never discovered what you had to write about at all—eh? but I have resolved upon my course, and shall take it: I care nothing for one man more than another; I made Cuthbert Gurney’s fortune, and I hope to prevent his marrying it; you may do what you please, but I take back the girl—eh?—*now he knows my mind*.”

“I was not aware,” said Sniggs, evidently *cowed* by Nubley’s extraordinary animation, “that your connexion with Mr. Cuthbert was so peculiar.”

“I tell you what it is, sir,” said Nubley, “it is so peculiar as this, that I am resolved, if I can help it, that the produce of a long life spent in a hot climate shan’t be wasted upon

unworthy objects; he is surrounded by sycophants and blood-suckers; he is a mere child—a sleepy child; and I am off to-morrow to wake him if I can, and show him his state and condition, and rescue him from the rapacious wretches who are about him; now there, that's it—*Tip't it him there, I think—eh?*”

“Of course,” said Sniggs, “under such circumstances, I have nothing to do but submit to your directions, sir, I shall write my own statement to him.”

“Write, said Nubley, “as I said before, what you please; but I know what I know; small blame to you to make friends with Cuthbert—but in *me* he has a friend ready made, and so you write to-night, and I'll go to-morrow—that's all—and don't mention the cherry-brandy. *Let him put that in his pipe and smoke it—eh?*”

“I see, sir,” said Sniggs, “that a very unfavourable feeling has been excited against me here, and I shall certainly not intrude any longer; I did not expect such treatment in this house.”

“Didn't you, Mr. Sniggs?” said Harriet—“that seems very odd!”

“I know, Ma'am,” said Sniggs, “I have been the victim of prejudice from the beginning; Mrs. Wells, I—know—eh?”

“My dear Mr. Sniggs,” said I, “do not let us try back upon old grievances; the whole of this question resolves itself into this, whether you should incur a certain degree of expense, and take a certain degree of trouble to convey Kitty Falwasser to Bath on the same day, or at least, within a day or two of that on which Nubley is upon other business going to the same house.”

“That,” said Sniggs, gathering up his hat and cloak and stick, “is all reasonable enough—but having been commissioned, delegated, directed——”

“There, there, Mr. Sniggs,” said Nubley, “that is all reasonable enough too—make out your bill—and I am sure Cuthbert will pay every farthing of it, and quite as much more as will compensate for all your trouble; but do not try to interfere in family matters, Mr. Sniggs—eh—we

can manage all those without what they call extrinsic aid, Mr. Sniggs—eh—*that's a settler.*"

"I only regret," said Sniggs, "that my constant endeavours to be useful here have been so ill-appreciated. I certainly never expected to hear such language in a house in which I have always been welcomed and well received; but the truth is, that the best intentions are liable to perversion, and—so—I—wish you a very good afternoon."

Saying which Sniggs rose to depart—I felt vexed and annoyed at the whole scene; but I could neither check Nubley, nor indeed impeach the character of his reproaches, which I feared were but too well founded—still I hate to give pain; I had long seen through Sniggs's duplicity—but then, what imperfect creatures we mortals are, and how earnestly throughout the world does every man of the world play his own game!

Sniggs bowed to Harriet, now formally, of course, in consequence of her "last words;" and to Nubley—I rang the bell—shook hands with him at the door——

"Tell Cuthbert to expect me to-morrow evening, if you please," cried Nubley; "*that's another settler—eh—*"

Sniggs heard, but did not answer—I went out on the stairs with him—he shook his head unconsciously, and not thinking he was observed—we parted.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN the midst of all these domestic proceedings, I was sorry to see that Fanny Wells had grown grave and silent, and was looking pale and unhappy: I could hardly attribute the alteration which I perceived, to the unhandsome defection of her ungracious Lieutenant, and yet I could discover no other probable cause for the change. Her maid, Kerridge, it seemed, was not much more lively than her mistress, for Tom Lazenby had, after all that he had promised, agreed to remain with Merman and his lady until he could get "suited;" Merman

having enjoined him to secrecy with regard to everything that had occurred at Blissford. It appeared—although how I became acquainted with facts and circumstances about which I never made any inquiry I shall leave to my married readers to surmise—that Fanny, from having first indignantly repelled the idea of reading Lazenby's letter to Kerridge, had brought herself, upon the occasion of a second offer of the "sight" of another epistle from him, to accept the proffered edification at the hands of her maid, inasmuch as she told her mistress that it contained a correct account of the state of affairs, and was, moreover, very curious in several other particulars.

Murrel Green, Thursday.

"DEAR SARAH,

"I should not wonder if you wasn't a little surprised at neither seeing nor hearing from me before this as I calculate you also will be at reading the date of this hepistol. The truth is, that the Captain whose stay in England will be very short says to me, just as I was coming off to you the night after I wrote, 'Lazenby' says he, 'where do you go when you leave me?' So I contumaciously expressed myself in these identical words, 'Why, sir' says I in a masculine manner, 'I am going to Blissford. Whereupon he observed to me that he supposed I had got what the French calls a *chair ah me* there, and that I was likely to settle myself in the neighbourhood—so then I expostulated with him and mentioned my notion of setting up in the general line, and he laughed and said that he hoped to do that himself some day, and was quite factious with me upon the toepick, which after his manner the night before, rather constaminated me, as Goldfinch says in Ben Jonson's 'Beggars' Opera; whereupon he says, looking at me in his droll way, 'Tom,' says he, 'I shan't be long in London; hadn't you better go up with me and Mrs. M. when we are married, and stop with us till we go?'—for, mind you, he is going to take her out with him to share the toils of the champain; and this was the very first of his directly insinuating that the thing was all settled: so I hesitates a little; and thinking of you, my dear Sarah, I says, says I, 'Sir, will you give me an hour to prepon-

derate?'—'To be sure I will,' says the Captain. Well, I begins to think; and I calculated I might make a few pounds by stopping, and paying his bills, and managing his luggage, and all *that*, before he went. So I says to Susan—she as I wrote about in my last—'If you was *me*,' says I, 'what would you do in this conundrum?'—'Why,' says Susan, 'if you ask me *my* advice, if I was *you* I'd stay and go with the Captain.' So I considers a bit more; and I says to her, 'I don't much like missus as is to be.'—'Nor I,' said Susan, 'although I have knowed her longer than you; but, for all *that*, I'm going as her maid; only to stay till they leave England for good.'—'Why,' says I, having heard her opinion of the future Mrs. Merman, and how Mrs. Gibson had gone away entirely excavated by the levity of her mistress's behaviour, 'I had no notion you would do such a thing.'

"So Susan says to me, 'Lazenby,' says she—she calls me Lazenby, for we are quite like brother and sister now—'my old missus wishes it; and she hints something about remembering me hereafter; and so what is it?' says Susan; 'in these days folks don't stick at trifles; and sure, if Miss Millicent is good enough to be Captain Merman's wife, she is good enough to be my missus.' That seemed remarkably judicial to my comprehension; and so, thinking what was good for Susan could not be interrogatory to me, up I goes to the Captain, and agrees to stay with him, as I tell you, till he bids a Jew to his native land, at which perriod, dear Sarah, I hope to return to you, like the good bee who, as Pope says in 'The Deserted Village'—

'Behaves in bee-hives as behoves him,

and bring you an affectionate art, and I should say upwards of seven pounds fourteen shillings in hard ca' by way of nunney. Susan says she should like to know you, she is so much indisposed towards you by my inscription of you; and I should like you to be friends, which perhaps may be some of these days, if she comes back to that part of the country. She would be uncommon nice company for both of us, she is so candied and filantropical, and it is a great thing for a married couple to have such a friend.

"I don't know whether you have ever been in this quarter of the world, although, as I don't think you could well have got to Blissford by any other road from London, pr'aps you have; it is very wild and romantic, with a bit of a green before the door, upon which there are geese, ducks, enseterar; and Susan and I am going to take a walk, and we shall carry this letter ourselves to Artley Row, where is the Post-office, because, as I have promised the Captain not to say anything one way or the other, I thought if he saw a letter redressed to the Passonage, he might inspect something; so Susan and I agreed it would be better to go out in the dusk as if miscellaneously, and slip it in unbeknown to any body, while master and missus is enjoying their *teat a teat* after dinner. We go on to the meterpolis in the morning, and Susan and I go outside in the rumble tumble, for Miss Pennefather has lent us the charriot, which I suppose I shall have to bring back, which, as I cannot do without horses, will be a very pretty incursion. I don't in course know how long the Captain will be before he goes, so do not fret. I have got your wach, which does not keep tim well, but I never look at it without thinking of you. Susan says it wants to have new hands put to it, and I shall give it to a watchmaker in town to riggle at it spontaneously on my arrival. The Captain and his mate seem very happy, which also makes me think of you, Sarah dear; she certainly is no beauty to my taste; she is a good deal in the Ottomy line, and I should say not easily pleased; but in course as yet it all goes uncommon comfortable; for, as O'Keefe says in his comical farce of 'Love for Love':—

To fools a curse, to those a lasting boon,
What wisely spends the hunney moon,'

"I hope poor Miss Fanny don't take on about the loss of master; I'm sure if I was she, and knew that he left me for the sake of Malooney's money, I should care no more about him than nothing at all—true love loves for 'tself a loan—don't it, dear Sarah? Oh, Sarah! Susan and I had some hot sassages and mashed potatoes for dinner to-day, and I did so think of you, and I said so; and Susan says to me, says she, 'Does your Sarah love sassages?' so

I said, says I, 'Yes, where's the girl of taste as doesn't?'—and so she says again, 'Then I wish she was here'—and we both laughed like bogies. So *that* shows we don't forget you.

"As to Miss Fanny, there is one thing—which, if you have an opportunity upon the sly, you may incoherently hint—which may be p'rhaps a considerable revelation of her despondency, if she still cares for master; which is this—the officer which is to have the recruiting party in place of him, as Rattan told me before I came away, is taller and better-looking than master, and quite the gentleman: p'raps, if you tell Miss Fanny that, it will controvert her regret, and make her easy—I know enough of the seck, Sarah, to know that it is with females as it is with fighters—to use the words of Young in his 'Abelard and Eloisa',—

'One down, t'other come on.'

"And so perhaps Miss Fanny may make up her mind to the gentleman which will relieve my master—I am sure I hope she may, for she is I am sure constipated to make any man happy in that way. "Well Sarah dear, I must now say good bye—or else, Tim flies so fast, Susan and I may be mist. I haven't room to tell you all about Master's wedding, which was all done with as little ceremony as possible, and as Susan says there was not a minnit to be lost, but I will explain all particulars when I come back to you which will not be long first. So squeeze my keeping you in expence for these few days, for I was so busy I could not write before, but Susan says she is sure you will forgive me, and so I think you will.

"I say, dear Sarah in exclusion I hope that you have not been speaking to William Waggle, the baker's young youth, because as I am absent, it might give some grounds for calomel—Mrs. Hodgson and those two Spinkeses her sisters is always a-watching—I'm not a bit jellies myself—no, I scorn the 'green hided malster,' as Morton says in his 'New Way to pay old Debts'—but I know the world—I know what the old Tabbies say, and how they skirtinize every individil thing which relates to us—as I says to Susan—the eyes of the hole world is on us two—you and me—and therefore Sarah dear, mind what you do, and do not encourage any

of them to walk with you in an evening—specially Bill, inasmuch as the whiteness of his jacket would make the round-counter the more evident to the Hargooses of the place.

“A Jew Sarah—the next you will hear from me will be in London—most probably at the Whiteoss Cellar or Pickadilly, or the Golden Cross Charing Cross, which the Captain thinks the quietest spots to fix upon—rely upon my righting you the minute I have time—I told Rattan that I was going back to Blissford, so he will have had no message for you, besides, I don’t want you to have any miliary connexions during my abstinence—therefore please to remember me in your art, as I do you in mine, and if you will, do me the fever to pay Mrs. Jukes three and ninepence which I owe her for washing my things, which I will repay you when we meet—best love, in which Susan though she does not know you, joins with equal sincerity—take care of yourself dear Sarah, and mind about the baker.

“Yours always true till death,

“THOMAS LAZENBY.”

A hasty perusal of this letter raised in Fanny’s mind a sort of suspicion that Lazenby was about to perform second to his amiable master in the fullest extent of the word; and although poor simple Sally Kerridge saw nothing in its contents except kindness and affection on the part of Tom, and of sympathy and friendship on that of Susan, the better educated young lady felt convinced in her own mind that her maid was destined, in a lower scale, but in an equal degree, to suffer very much the same sort of treatment which she herself had undergone. It was, however, no part of her inclination to awaken any disagreeable suspicions in the mind of her *soubrette*, and therefore having assured herself of the irrevocable nature of Merman’s connexion with the lady of his aunt’s choice, she returned the epistle to its right owner, resolved to conquer, if possible, that gnawing anxiety which now never left her free from pain; but for which, if she had been seriously asked, she could not have assigned any real cause. It was a nervousness—a regret for what was past—a dread of something to come; and yet was neither one nor the other to be really cared for.

In the morning succeeding Sniggs’s uncomfortable de-

parture from Ashmead, Nubley was awake and stirring before any of the family party, and in the first instance, proceeded to Chittagong Lodge, which, in point of fact, was in the possession of the police-officers, who, having suffered the ladies to go, had remained there for the night, in the hope—utterly vain it must be confessed—that they might gain some tidings of the object of their search: all *that*, however, was at an end. The *soi-disant* captain had vanished entirely; and therefore Nubley, now that Tom's funeral was over, took the precaution of appointing the upholsterer, undertaker, &c. &c., of Blissford, to meet him at the Lodge, in order to put somebody in charge of the premises, and to make out a general inventory of the furniture and effects; not so much with the view of ascertaining what he actually possessed, as to establish the fact of what he had lost, and thus the dear little absent man, to whom, on account of his strange abstracted manner I had given very little credit for business-like habits, or even an ordinary share of intellectuality, proved himself exactly the reverse of my brother, his late partner, Cuthbert; and while he maintained his original purpose of starting for Bath at noon with his fair charge, I found him before breakfast arranging and settling all his own business in a matter in which, as I heard from Harriet, he never would have been involved, if it had not been that Mrs. Nubley declared Captain Thompson one of the most charming persons in the world, he having made her believe that his father was the greatest possible friend of one of her aunts. and expressed his delight at having been so fortunate as to fall in accidentally with a lady of whom he had heard his dear relation speak in such extraordinary high terms.

Nubley, however, bore all his mishaps without murmuring, for this reason:—if he had permitted himself to complain, it would have been a practical admission that he had yielded to the suggestions of his wife; a course of proceeding which not only in what he said aloud, but what he thought aloud, he uniformly deprecated. Having, however, at some particular moment of extreme goodnature submitted his own opinions to her judgment, he thought the best thing he could do was neither to proclaim himself defeated, nor reproach her with being the cause of his loss. So, up he got, and out he

went; and when he came back to the breakfast-room, he informed me that the police had withdrawn themselves—that he had obtained quiet possession of the house—and that beyond the loss of rent, wine, and “sundry unregarded trifles,” he thought he should not suffer more than the cost of cleaning the premises, and, perhaps, new-papering one or two of the rooms; and all the evils and mischiefs resulting from the misconduct of the Thompsons he balanced somewhat satisfactorily for himself by observing “that an empty house was much better than a bad tenant;” it being evident to me, as I have already stated, that his calmness and philosophy upon the occasion were mainly attributable to the excitement of his feelings upon other points more nearly connected with myself and my interests; and the first distinct clear order which he gave to his servant when he entered the hall, was delivered in these words:—“The horses are to be here at one o’clock, Thomas—not a minute later!”

Kate heard this mandate, and made a face which she did not think I saw, but which seemed in its expression to indicate—“Then you may go by yourself, you old monster.” It was all in vain, for it was perfectly evident that Nubley’s mind was made up, and that what Mrs. Nubley called his obstinacy in small matters, but which became on more important points really firmness, was not to be shaken either by the flippancy of Sniggs or the pertness of Miss Falwasser. In fact, Miss Falwasser appeared perfectly aware of the extent of her influence over the old gentleman, and therefore contented herself by exhibiting her dissatisfaction by signs and tokens, which, however, in most instances, she took especial care should not be seen by the person whose contravention of her wishes had excited them.

Youth is in general so candid, so ingenuous, and so little skilled in what are called the “ways of the world,” that I could scarcely believe the evidence of my senses while watching the proceedings of this mere child. Four-and-twenty hours before Nubley’s announcement of his determination to take her with him to Bath, she had treated him, and his observations and remarks, not only with neglect, but contempt: she regarded him as a silly old man, about whom nobody cared, and seemed to enjoy the cheateries of the

Thompson faction as a vastly good joke played off upon a simpleton ; while Mrs. Nubley, who had in vain endeavoured to prepossess the youthful beauty in her favour, was an object of her undisguised ridicule ; but from the moment that Nubley, in giving his reasons for enforcing her return with *him*, had stated the nature and character of his influence over Cuthbert, and she had heard *him*, whom she had previously despised, censuring, and declaring his determination to alter the conduct of "Pappy," whose will she naturally looked upon as law, and whose decrees she held to be as immutable as the laws of what Mr. Lazenby would have called "the Maids and Parsons," she seemed entirely to change her line of behaviour towards him ; and although she appeared sulky and cross, and although his mandates certainly caused the mummeries which I have just noticed, still her antics were played off with the greatest care that he should not detect them, and what was at first an obstinate determination to resist the journey, sank into a reluctant consent to do what dear Pappy's dear old friend thought best.

The time wore on, and I perceived a certain whispering in progress between Miss Kitty and her maid, who had been to the "shop" to make some purchases, and I overheard, accidentally, Kitty in reply to something her *aide* had said, exclaim in a louder tone than perhaps she was aware of, "No answer!—What! was he at home, and no answer?" A mumbling noise succeeded this burst, and I was left in doubt whether the young lady's last appeal had been vainly made to the doctor or the dancing-master, for I had had my suspicions with regard to a new attack upon the latter, in spite of Kate's avowed denunciation of him—to use her own elegant phraseology—as a spooney.

When the carriage drew up to the door, and Nubley, after a brief but animated conversation, all tending to confirm me not only in the sincerity, but the value of his exertions in my behalf, and I saw him and Miss Falwasser with her beautiful countenance suffused with tears, driven from the gates, I felt a relief much like what a "general dealer," as the term goes, must experience when he beholds the departure of a barrel of gunpowder from his premises which do not afford any secure and suitable magazine for its reception,

to which I had likened the sweet combustible young lady when she first arrived at Ashmead ; and, as I went up stairs and met Harriet on the landing-place, watching the progress of the departing travellers, I could not help exclaiming, although Jane was by—" Well, thank our stars she is gone ! " Harriet gave me a look, and so did Jane. Harriet's was to warn me that Jane was present, and Jane's was to announce to me that she cordially assented to my congratulations.

It is not worth while to record the various little circumstances and anecdotes by which Jane, when she felt herself quite safe from the persecutions of her elder sister, corroborated all our suspicions, and substantiated all our apprehensions with regard to the systematic exercise of Mrs. Brandyball's influence over Cuthbert during the brief period of his having actually been in her custody, for I could consider it little else, nor regard him in any other light than an invalid placed under the charge of an ill principled nurse. It seemed, however, that the school was to be abandoned altogether. Kitty had hinted as much, or rather she had put the case hypothetically ; but, in point of fact, this relinquishment had been already so far carried into effect, that the blue board upon which " Montpelier Seminary for Young Ladies " had heretofore glittered in golden letters, had been removed, and that the name of Mrs. Brandyball alone appeared upon the gate. This and one or two other particulars, which Jane readily and even anxiously imparted to us, satisfied both Harriet and myself, that even if Nubley should be in time to avert the calamity which threatened us, there was not a moment to spare.

It may naturally be supposed that the period of the old gentleman's absence was one of no small anxiety to us ; nor were we permitted to enjoy our suspense with the calmness which might have moderated its acuteness. It must be recollected that, during the expedition of our kind emissary, we had to cheer, soothe, and entertain his lady, who, having recovered in a certain degree from her late indisposition, appeared to have received a new power of tormenting, from the temporary repose she had experienced. Anxiety about her spouse, and her nervous solicitude about various favourite articles of furniture at Chittagong, imprecations upon the

heads of all the Thompsons, criminations of the police for not apprehending the whole "gang" of them, and sending them all to Botany Bay without conviction or even trial, formed the general theme of her conversation, to which we were obliged to be constantly assenting, and in which she contrived to indulge at the rate and in the tone of a cock parrot in the highest possible health and spirits.

"Lauk, my dear, Mr. Nubley is such a man—he! he! he!—to think of going to let Chittagong to a family of cheats, without ever inquiring about what they were, or who they were. Ah, well! Men, are the worst bargainers in the world; the pretty faces of those saucy misses did it, I have no doubt. I am sure I ought not to say so—dear me, no—he! he! he!—Mr. Nubley is as kind a husband as any in England, only he is led away. I am sure I hope nothing will happen to him, poor dear!—no overturn or break down; and then, my dear Mrs. Gurney, that beautiful rosewood work-table, with the ormolu edging and the crimson bag, all spotted and dotted, and the dinner-table all white with the heat of the dishes. Lauk, Mr. Gurney—he! he! he!—you are such a man, I declare, if you arn't laughing at me."

I most positively denied the fact, because it was not so, but I believe in vain, for our guest was one of those who, like Scrub in the play, fancied that everybody who laughed, was laughing at *her*. Still we managed remarkably well. Harriet and she visited Chittagong; and Harriet, with her whole heart and mind at Montpelier, endeavoured to appear interested in the objects which interested her friend and companion in her first excursion after her confinement; and to be sure, the mischief the wretched people had done was enough to have provoked a much less irascible person than Mrs. Nubley. The third day would bring us intelligence from Bath. "Lauk, my dear, do you think Mr. N. will write? He! he! he!—he is such a man!" screamed Mrs. Nubley.

"Yes," said I, "I am sure he will—he will not only be anxious to give *you* tidings of himself, but to send *me* news of Cuthbert."

"Ah!" said his lady, "that is, if he does not forget it."

He did not forget it, for Mrs. Nubley received on the third

morning a letter of which I knew not the purport, and I the following one, the contents of which were by no means satisfactory. I confess, however, that I was infinitely less surprised than distressed at the intelligence they conveyed. Here we have it:—

“*White Hart, Bath,*
———, 18—.

“DEAR GILBERT,

“I reached Montpelier about an hour later than I proposed, and did not get there till between eight and nine. My young companion appeared at first sulky, then sleepy, and then sick, and said she must travel outside; this—don’t you see?—was a puzzler; there was only room for two in the rumble. If I had her maid in—don’t you see—that would have been odd? and if I sent *her* into the rumble with her maid, I must have had *my* man inside—this worried me. I explained the difficulty, and so at last she agreed to stay where she was, if I had one of the glasses down—which, in course, I had, and have thereupon got an uncommonly bad tooth-ache.

“We went on very agreeable—the young lady and I—for we did not say much; only now and then she began to grieve for Tommy, and cry about him a little. I told her it was very natural she should regret his loss, although I thought to myself by your account of him he could be no great loss to anybody—only in course, that did not escape me, any more than what I felt concerning her general conduct, and that of the old Jezebel at Montpelier. We stopped at Warminster, and had a broiled fowl and mushroom-sauce, together with potatoes and some cold boiled beef, which I relished much—it was almost as good as hump, but you can’t judge of the difference, because humps when they come home are never satisfactory—a mutton cutlet, not nice—an apple tart, with cream; pint of Madeira, and one glass of brandy: the man and the maid refreshing also, for it must have been cold outside, although company makes comfort anywhere. Well, then, on we went, and Kate was in better spirits, and talked more, and seemed as if she thought I was not quite so great a brute as she had taken me for,

and told me that she thought Pappy was very fond of dear B.B., which was her facetious abbreviation of Mrs. Brandyball's name; and so all went on very well, and it grew dark, and as I did not know how to find my way to Montpelier, when we got to Midford I begged her to tell me what directions were to be given to the post-boy; and within a mile of Bath—and, as it turned out, within half a mile of Montpelier—he received his instructions, and with very littling haggling and boggling we were driven to the gate.

“‘Dear Montpelier!’ exclaimed Kitty, as the bell was rung by the servant—The dogs began to bark—‘dear Popsy!’ cried Kitty—‘dear Towzer!—dear Nep!—I know your voices.’ And when the gate was opened, ‘Dear bow-window!—dear Pappy!’ all in ecstasies, which did not startle me, because I remember when my poor wife used to talk in the same way; so I did not say a word, but I thought to myself, ‘stup’d chit! ridiculous creature!’ and much more, which in course I never uttered; but still I thought Kitty snapped me up as she got out of the carriage, and ran through the hall to the room, where she knew she should find Cuthbert installed, inasmuch as a door-way has been made through the wall of Montpelier House into the adjoining cottage which he inhabits. And then there was a screaming and a sort of crowing, and a kind of rapture, and a general noise accompanying the reception, which no doubt made my post-boy fancy that I had arrived at my home, and his duty was done. I therefore told my man to desire him to wait and take me into Bath, and proceeded by slower steps towards the presence of my friend Cuthbert.

“I observed that the welcome greetings of Miss Kitty suddenly subsided into silence as I approached, and when, without further invitation than was offered by open doors, and a light upon a table in an ante-room, I adopted the natural fashion of following my nose, and found myself in the presence of my old friend and partner, I did not think the expression of his countenance was such as to make me imagine my visit a particular welcome one; nor could I doubt, by that which characterised the not over delicate features of Mrs. Brandyball, that that respectable lady most

devoutly wished me in a climate considerably hotter than Calcutta, from

“ Whose *burn* no traveller returns.”

Forgive my being jocose, but I feel so happy that I was not provoked to express my detestation of her character and conduct to her face, that now I have got to my home—as I call my inn—and am set down to write, I cannot help being in some sort facetious.

“ Well—when I went in—there was Cuthbert almost buried in a huge armed chair—his legs up on an ottoman—sort of thing before him—Mrs. Brandyball’s seat, which she had quitted upon our approach, being close to his left shoulder. On the table before him was a small round board, stuck full of little ivory pegs, all ready for playing the game of fox and goose—two or three books—some needles used for knitting, or netting, or knotting, or what not—a parcel of something that looked to me very like weekly bills—and a glass of sangaree or some other mixture, which he seemed to have scarcely tasted—and these, with an inkstand, and some writing paper, under which lay a cheque-book, furnished out the board at which, as it seemed under due surveillance, he was permitted to preside.

“ When I advanced, Kitty had quitted his neck, which she had embraced with a fervour ill suited to his personal powers, however acceptable it might have been to his mental perceptions, and had transferred her ardent acknowledgments to her dear B.B., who appeared profusely lavish in her welcome home to the darling of her heart; of course, Jane was the next subject of inquiry, and as Kitty seemed at a loss to account for her absence, I felt it right to put that matter at rest as speedily as possible, by explaining her wish to stay with you and Harriet; at the termination of which explanation I saw Kitty and Mrs. Brandyball exchange looks; that of the latter lady being particularly distinguished by the unusual exhibition in good society, of a ‘wink:’ of course I did not let them know that I had seen this interchange of signals, and Mrs. Brandyball put me quite at my ease, by observing that ‘where the inherent disposition of the mind unequivocally conduces to the encouragement of

sympathetic affection, it would be absolutely inhuman to interpose any restrictive regulations which might even remotely tend to deteriorate from the genuineness of the inclination, or by compulsory measures endeavour to control the beautiful single-mindedness of juvenile prepossessions.' I thought to myself, this is all fudge!—in course I did not say so—but I didn't like the woman a bit the more for all her flummery.

"Cuthbert did not seem much to care about Jane's staying behind; whether he was soothed by the superficial speech of the lady, or whether Kate's acknowledged disregard for her, had lowered her in his esteem, I don't pretend to say; all I know is, that after Kate had run to her room to 'take off her things,' she returned to Cuthbert, and again throwing her arm round his neck, did nothing but kiss him and say, 'Poor Pappy! dear Pappy!'

" 'I have got,' said he, as if recollecting something not at all apropos to the visit, 'a letter here from Mr. Sniggs—eh?—and he tells me—Mrs. Brandyball—what does he tell me?—about my poor Tom's funeral. It is a sad business.'

" 'My dear Cuthbert,' said I, 'the surprise of seeing me—'

" 'Mr. Gurney was not in the least surprised, sir,' said Mrs. Brandyball, looking blue with excitement. Mr. Sniggs had kindly taught us to have the pleasure of expecting you this evening.'

"The way in which Mrs. Brandyball emphasized the word pleasure gave a better idea of her feeling than anything else.

" 'Ah, by-the-by,' said your brother, 'where is Sniggs—eh?—you told me why he did not come, but somehow or another I have forgotten it.'

" 'Why,' said the lady, not in the gentlest tone, 'of course you know the reason; Mr. Nuble ordered him not to come, because he thought fit to come himself and as he was coming, Kitty was to come with him.'

" 'Ah, I see,' said Cuthbert. 'Well, and you were at the poor boy's funeral?'

" 'No, Mr. Gurney,' interrupted Mrs. Brandyball; 'Mr. Sniggs told you in his letter that nobody was present but your brother, and his own 'prentice.'

“ ‘Assistant, dear,’ said Kitty, who had had the advantage of making the pale-faced lad’s acquaintance during her two visits at Sniggs’s house.

“ ‘Ah, well, it’s a sad business,’ said Cuthbert:—‘and you are come to stay with us?’

“ ‘A very short time,’ said I. ‘I have some matters of business to talk over with you: but they’ll keep till to-morrow.—You don’t ask after Gilbert, and his wife and child.’

“ ‘I don’t think,’ said Cuthbert, ‘to tell you the truth, that either Gilbert or his wife care one cawrie for *me*. Why didn’t *he* come here when poor Tom died, or before he died, and tell me all about it? instead of *that*, the child, poked out of the house to a strange place, was left to perish neglected.’

“ ‘All this I knew to be a lesson taught him by rote, and I felt half inclined to say so; but I kept my thoughts to myself, although Mrs. Brandyball seemed to know what was passing in my mind, for she said directly, ‘Nobody here would take the liberty of putting words into Mr. Gurney’s mouth;’ so I said to her, ‘I didn’t say there was;’ upon which the charming Kitty burst out laughing, and she and her amiable preceptress withdrew to the other end of the room.

“ ‘Well,’ said I, in an under tone to Cuthbert, ‘I hope you find yourself tolerably well?’

“ ‘Better than ever I expected to be again,’ said Cuthbert; ‘this good, kind creature sacrifices everything for me—has sent away all the children, except two, to keep the place quiet, and devotes herself to me—she does everything for me; and now dear Kitty is come back—eh?—and—how’s your wife?’

“ ‘She is quite well,’ said I; and I thought in my own mind, what a fool you suffer yourself to be made; but I kept *that* to myself, and Cuthbert said, ‘ ‘Gad, Nubley, you are at your old tricks again,’ which I suppose referred to something that the infernal Mrs. Brandyball had been telling him about me and Mrs. N.; however, I found my welcome at Montpelier but an equivocal one, and saw that very little delicacy was adopted to disguise the anxiety of the whole clique for

my departure, in order to give them the opportunity of talking over all that had happened at Blissford; but as my purpose was fixed, and I determined to have an hour or two with Cuthbert all to myself, I thought the best thing I could do would be to relieve them of my presence this evening, and start fresh with him in the morning: so skilfully blinding myself to all the nods and winks of the half-weeping, half-giggling young Miss, and the encouraging tappings and pappings which she received from the mistress of the house, I told Cuthbert that I could not stay then, for I was keeping the post-horses, but would call between one and two to-morrow, to which Cuthbert answered by inquiring of Mrs. Brandyball, if he had any engagement for the next day at that time.

“ ‘None,’ replied the lady, ‘till three, when you know you are to give Mr. Dawbeny a sitting.’ ”

“ ‘Ha!’ said Cuthbert, fumbling about for his pocket-handkerchief, which Kitty bounded from the distant sofa to pick up for him; ‘that’s it—so—I am—all to please *her*,’ added he, pointing with his thumb over his shoulder at the *orgon* who stood close behind him.

“ ‘Isn’t Mr. Dawbeny that handsome man, pappy, with the black whiskers?’ said Kitty.

‘Yes, dear,’ said Mrs. Brandyball, giving her a sort of corrective frown—not corrective so much as cautionary—not a frown of anger, but a frown which seemed to say,

‘Mind what you talk about while that old fogey is here.’ I knew what she meant, but I said nothing; yet I think they saw what was passing in my mind, for the lady turned what I call dead civil in a minute, and asked me, for the first time, if I would not take something before I went? I very politely answered, ‘No, I thank you,’ because, as I say, civility costs nothing; but in my own mind, I felt myself saying, ‘I would see you at old Nick first;’ but mum: so I smiled and looked courteous, and Cuthbert said,

‘I assure you, Nubley, Mrs. B. is in earnest, pray have something.’ I persisted in my negative, and so having settled my appointment for to-morrow, I made my bow to the ladies, and shook hands with Cuthbert; but la, deary me! how thin and shrivelled his poor hand has grown!—

and so Kitty said she was much obliged to me for the journey, and gave me a kiss. La! Gilbert, that girl kisses everything—well, and I didn't like it, so I said 'Thank you, dear,' and felt myself shudder as if I could have said, 'Ugh!'—and she ran away and laughed, and said, 'Well, sir, the next I give you, you *shall* thank me for;' why she said *that* I do not know.

"Well, out I came and got into the carriage, and there I found Cuthbert's man Hutton talking to my man Watson—they had known each other before, and so I got in, and nobody but a maid-servant to light me out, and she calling, 'Hutton! Hutton!' and then I told the postboy to drive me here; and here, as I have told you, I am: and I wish that was all I had to tell you——

"I got myself snuggled down by a good fire, and I ordered myself a glass of hot punch, for I felt a little chilly and I was mortally vexed; and I furthermore ordered myself some supper, for you see what I had eaten I had eaten early; and then I told Watson to bring me my morning-gown, although it was evening, and my slippers, and what not, to make me comfortable; and when he brought them, he asked me if I had heard about Mr. Cuthbert and Mrs. B. ? and so I said no, because I had not——

" 'I never was more surprised in my life, sir,' says he.

" 'At what?' says I——

" 'Why, sir, Hutton is going to leave M.. Cuthbert,' said Watson.

" 'Why then,' says I, 'he'll die: he is his prop—his right hand.'

" 'Ay, sir,' says Watson; 'but Mr. Cuthbert is going to have another prop.'

"So, in course, I asked him what he meant; thinking he was talking like an ass—not that asses ever *do* talk, only I didn't say so, because I would not hurt the feelings of anybody, Gilbert.

" 'No, sir, I'm no ass,' said Watson, just as if he had understood what was passing in my mind, 'what I mean, is what I know; Mr. Cuthbert Gurney is to be married next Thursday week to Mrs. Brandyball.'

"After that, my dear Gilbert, I heard nothing more—I

would not believe it—I always dreaded some bedevilment; but I never could have fancied! Cuthbert marry *her*!—why, deary me, deary me, the thing is preposterous! The man has no more need of a wife than a Highlander has of knee-buckles, or a toad of a side-pocket: did you ever hear of such a thing? However, Watson persists in it—and think of his turning away Hutton, who did everything for him, and marrying this woman! You must apply for a commission of lunacy against him; something must be done—why—in so short a time, the use she has made of her influence! And how did she obtain it? I cannot trust myself to write more; but to-morrow I shall write to you again, after I have seen him and talked to him, poor silly man! However, take care, dear Gilbert, to have whatever letters arrive at Ashmead or Chittagong forwarded to me here: I have said *that* in my letter to Mrs. Nubley; but she has a head and so has a pin—eh—don't you see?

“Now, if you think it advisable, say nothing of this to her, or to your Harriet—it is all of no use anticipating misfortunes—we must try to avert them: not that I see much chance without violent measures. Give my kind love, and tell Jenny Falwasser that she is neither missed nor wanted at Montpelier, and that I am uncommon glad she took the line of stopping where she is, although you had better look sharp that you are not saddled with her altogether. Keep up your spirits; my supper is served—gadso! another broiled fowl and mushrooms: never mind, they didn't know I had one for dinner, and I told them to get what they liked, and so what *they* like I like, and shall fally-to nobly; and so love to all of you, and confusion to the Brandy-balls.

“Yours always,

“W. NUBLEY.

“P.S. If you should hear any tidings of the Thompsons, in course you will let me know.”

So then, this was the result of Nubley's mission to Montpelier. All my worst suspicions were confirmed; nay, they were so far outrun, that although I certainly anticipated some such result in the course of time, I was not prepared to find such advances made in a few days, and those days, too, for the

greater part ostensibly devoted to mourning for the loss of the amiable Tom. Knowing dear Harriet's sensitiveness, and dreading to agitate her needlessly, I resolved upon adopting my kind old friend's advice of keeping her in ignorance of the real state of affairs; and when she begged me to show her Nubley's letter, I hinted that there were parts of it not meant for ladies' eyes; she merely said "*that I think is by no means unlikely;*" and was satisfied by my telling her that Cuthbert was well, and that Nubley was to see him again in the morning following the evening in which he had written his letter. After this, she inquired no further, and when we retired to rest, she sank into a gentle slumber, which, thanks be to my better information as to the state of affairs at Bath I could not successfully emulate.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN the difficulties by which I was surrounded, it struck me that the very best course I could adopt, before I either answered Nubley's letter or decided upon any practical measure, would be to consult my worthy father-in-law, although I took the step with the extremely unsatisfactory conviction on my mind that whatever was decided upon, would prove useless and ineffectual. Judge then my surprise, when having invited the reverend gentleman to a conference, at finding him perfectly aware of the intended union, the fact having been that morning communicated to him by Sniggs, who had received the intelligence, *sub rosa*, from Mrs. Brandyball, in a letter, the main object of which, it appeared was to detach poor little Jane from Ashmead, and secure her return to Montpelier in time for the wedding.

"But how," said I to Wells, "how came this intriguing apothecary, who appears to be preferred in the confidence of my brother to his oldest friend Nubley, to have been authoritatively made acquainted with an important and decided change in our family, even before myself—and what can

have induced him to impart this 'private and confidential communication to you?'

"Sniggs shall speak for himself," said my father-in-law. "He is a good deal affected by this letter and its contents, and nothing but a fear of misapprehension hindered him from coming with the news to you direct. When I got your summons, I wrote to him to desire him to call at the same time, concluding from the tone of your note, that you had heard of the affair from Nubleby, and therefore anxious that our Galen here should have the credit of his first intention."

"But, Sniggs," said I, "has behaved——"

"Let him explain himself," said Wells, "we are none of us perfect. I think, when he 'states his case,' you will be inclined to entertain a better opinion of his conduct than you now hold."

"I assure you," said I, "that nothing will give me greater pleasure, for nothing I hate more in the world than being obliged to admit that I have been deceived in a man upon whom I had implicitly relied."

"That's it," said Wells; "such a result involves not only the ingratitude of the deceiver, but the perception of the deceived, and, therefore, cuts two ways; however, as the people in the plays say, Here he is."

And sure enough there he stood before us—as different in manner and appearance from what I had ever seen him before as light from dark. The pert, dapper gaiety of his manner was subdued into a quiet, steady gait; and his usually animated countenance was softened by an expression which it was impossible to resist. I held out my hand to him with a perfect confidence in the justice of Wells's opinion concerning him. He took it with an air of *empressement* unusual with him, but which, prepared as I was for the scene, spoke volumes.

Having gotten thus far, I was puzzled as much as Taylor the water-poet says *he* was in his accidence:—

"For having got from possum to posset,
I there was gravell'd, could no further get."

I hesitated—so did Sniggs—he evidently wished to speak—I unquestionably wished to hear: whether he were to begin voluntarily, or whether I were to begin to induce or suggest

seemed the only doubt; the worthy apothecary, in point of fact, not being aware that I had been in any degree made acquainted with even the outline of the case. Wells, seeing the natural embarrassment of the parties, one prepared to give, and the other to receive an explanation, broke the ice, by observing to Sniggs that I was in possession of the fact that he had received a letter from Mrs. Brandyball, and was apprized of its contents.

"Mr. Gurney," said Sniggs, very deeply affected, and the spontaneous tear, glistening in eyes which I had scarcely ever before seen except sparkling with mirth, affected me much. They tell us there exists a certain sympathy in our nature, touching that particular organ, which produces irritability in our own, when looking at irritation in that of another. Whatever the cause might be, I cannot stop to consider; I certainly felt that the sorrow I saw was sincere: I wished it had not been where it was; but I felt myself not entirely proof against its infection.

"Mr. Gurney," said Sniggs, "I am sure you have felt my conduct, in this affair with your brother and his family, not what it ought to have been—I know it—not a word is necessary to explain your sentiments: permit me, therefore, to exculpate myself, and, if possible, reinstate myself in your good opinion by a candid disclosure of my position."

"Really," said I, "I am not aware——"

"Yes, you are, sir," said Sniggs; "and if you are not, I am. From the moment I first had the pleasure of introducing myself to Ashmead I was kindly received here; and if some little prejudices existed against me professionally—my friend, Mr. Wells, will understand what I mean—I had every reason to be satisfied and gratified with the manner in which I was treated."

"Oh!" said I, "pray don't speak of that. I——"

"Yes," said Sniggs, emphatically, "I must speak of it—I think of it—and I must speak my thoughts: I will, however, be brief; for I need not recapitulate the history of your brother's arrival, of his kindness with your own, of his confidence in my professional ability, of the illness of poor Tom"—and here, more to my surprise than before, Sniggs again faltered—"or his unfortunate death:—but—what I

have done there I know seems—seems—poh, what do I mean by seems?—*was* extremely uncourteous, uncivil, and presuming—originated in nothing more than a feeling that I was responsible entirely, on the score of that poor boy, to Mr. Cuthbert; that, whatever was the reason—I did not stop to calculate or argue—I have nothing to do with family differences—he looked to *me, me*, personally about him, and I felt that I looked to *him* for whatever professional remuneration I might deserve—and therefore—I am candid; for I go the whole length of admitting my fault to a certain extent—I certainly did defer to him, as my immediate superior, to the neglect of those to whom I ought——”

“But,” said I, again interrupting him, “I assure you, my dear Sniggs—” (if Harriet had heard *that*)—“I require no explanation—I know no fault——”

——“No, sir,” said Sniggs, “but you must have these explanations, else how could I stand justified before you in having in my possession this letter from that devil incarnate, Mrs. Brandyball? I once hinted that I had heard something about her—that Mrs. Lillywhite, who used to live at the bow-windowed house at the corner of Caddle-street, knew her, and told me things about her—never mind that—the woman, sir, if you recollect, with the crimson velvet bonnet and the green cock’s-feather—ah, well!—but—I certainly did act upon what I thought were Mr. Cuthbert Gurney’s instructions, and all that; but the letter—the letter!”

“What letter?” said I.

“You had better come to *that* at once,” said Wells; “I know Gilbert is perfectly prepared to give you credit for the best intentions, and make any allowance for certain extravagances committed under a false impression; but the letter is the point.

“Well, then,” said Sniggs, “perhaps that is best—that, in fact, will speak for itself—what’s to come is, as you say, the point. The truth is this:—feeling myself bound to Mr. Cuthbert, and strengthened in that feeling by Mrs. Brandyball, I followed what I believed was the will of the old gentleman, and seconded, if you recollect, by your own wish that I should go to him, became, as it were, transferred

from you to him. Well, bless me, as I said to Mrs. S., I would not offend Mr. Gilbert Gurney for mints of money—but his brother is so amiable!”

“Well,” said I, “but the letter——”

“Exactly so,” said Sniggs; “all I mean to say is, that I thought in all I did I was doing for the best; and as to dividing families, my poor Mrs. S. only thought that the young ladies were to be put under her care just because Mrs. Gilbert was not well enough to be about with them; and I am sure, if I were to die this minute——”

“But, my dear Mr. Sniggs,” said Wells, “we admit all this: let the worst come to the worst, it was an error in judgment; you thought you were acting rightly—but the letter——”

“That’s it,” said Sniggs, whose extraordinary anxiety to make a favourable impression as to what had passed before *the* letter arrived, led him into the most fidgetty prolixity imaginable—“yes, I declare to heaven—dear, dear!—only think! oh, that infernal cherry-brandy!—but then, such kindness!—I really—upon my word I feel too much:—and then the hospitality—I wouldn’t, I declare, for all the world, have done—dear me—dear me——”

“Well, then,” said I, “now, my dear friend, give me your hand, all that is forgotten; I see you are in earnest; I am sure your heart is in its proper place—all that affair is settled. I will meet *your* candour as candidly: I *was* annoyed—you have explained—and now we are quits and as good friends as ever.”

“No, no,” said Sniggs, “we can’t be: I have been wrong—but the letter”—saying which, he, to my great delight, as thinking it likely to be the *finale* of the conversation, drew it out of his pocket—“this letter opened my eyes—I saw, my dear sir, I had been betrayed by that Hottentot of a woman. Dear me, sir, there’s no compassing her in body or mind;—there it is—I tell you, sir, as to the effect this infernal letter has had upon my mental vision, tutty is a trifle to it.”

“May I read it?” said I.

“Read it?” said Sniggs, “to be sure; why—why did I speak to our dear Rector about it else?”

The letter was couched in these terms :—

“ *Montpelier.*

“ Dear Mr. Sniggs.—The exercise of delicate attentions which you have so continuously evinced towards our inestimable friend Mr. Gurney, and the disinterested and ingenuous sympathy you have invariably exhibited in all his views and wishes, have excited in his generous and sensitive heart a respect for your character, and an affection for the attributes of your mind, which have formed the basis of a confidence such as he is not usually disposed to make.

“ Encouraged by the exalted opinion he entertains of your qualities—mental, professional, and (may I use the word ?) *cordial*—I have ventured to write you a few lines expressive of his wishes—breathed to me in moments of entire and implicit reliance upon my affection and discretion—with regard to his relations at Ashmead. You, as he conceives, have been treated there in a manner scarcely correspondent with the exertions you have always made, not only for their good, in the way of medical attendance, but as a social and agreeable companion—and for your qualities in that character can I not myself vouch?—and he thinks, from what dear Mrs. Sniggs has heard of the desire of Jane Falwasser to stay at Ashmead, in conjunction with the resolution of that odious Mr. Nubley to come here to-morrow, that Mrs. Gilbert Gurney has been using some undue influence to wean the affections of the child from a devoted parent—as in truth Mr. Cuthbert Gurney may be called. In short, he is prejudiced against his brother, and wonders that you yourself are blind to the manner in which, upon your own showing, in your letter of yesterday, they have behaved towards you. Our object is, in case Jane should not return to-morrow with old Nubley, to get her away, *coûte qui coûte*, from Ashmead ; and, that being the case, you are relied upon, as the means of accomplishing the removal. Before I say more on this point, I must tell you to drop all further mystery, that it is a great object to *me* to have the girl detached from the Gilbert Gurneys ; and since I have seen how kindly you have fallen in with my views up to the present moment, and with the certainty that Mr. Cuthbert Gurney duly appreciates your merits, and is deter-

mined adequately to reward all your exertions, I think it right to tell you that on Thursday week I am to become his wife.

"This is of course told you in the strictest confidence, and told you only to convince you of the reliance I have upon you, founded on your ready acquiescence in the suggestions I made when you were here. As to poor Tom, his death is nothing to lament—he was one of the worst-conditioned boys I ever saw ; but of that we must be silent because he was a favourite with our dear friend. My present great object, I repeat, is to get Jane away. I want no link nor connexion with them ; and I also repeat that from the way in which you managed the earlier part of the affair, you are the man to do the rest. The letter desiring Jane to come to her father-in-law will be of course directed to you, and will—forgive me for touching upon such matters—contain a check on Mr. Cuthbert's banker for two hundred pounds ; I told him he could not do less. You will enforce the child's removal, and I will take care that his letter shall be quite strong enough in the way of credentials.

"I am as yet not rich, but do not be angry with me for making this letter into a small packet, in order to give room for a pair of bracelets which I think will become the arms of dear Mrs. Sniggs : of course you will caution her as to mentioning to Jane for the present the source whence they come—a fortnight over, and it will matter little ; and I assure you I feel a conscious satisfaction in making an alliance with a dear kind creature whose happiness it will be my constant study to secure.

"Miss Fatley Fubbs, and that good-natured Eliza Skilly-galee—a darling of mine—whom you saw when you were here, are both gone, so that my school is broken up altogether. When you were with us, you did not at all comprehend what I meant about getting rid of my loves. I have now, to use a low expression, packed them all off, except one, poor dear Adelgitha Dumps, whose father is consul-general at Owyhee, and has left nobody in England to take her off my hands.

"Let me hear by return of post—direct to *me*—and re-

member me kindly to Mrs. Sniggs—mind she does not mention the bracelets.

“Yours truly,
“B.”

“Well, sir,” said Sniggs, when I had read the letter and thrown it down in disgust, “are you surprised now at the repentance, the contrition, the horror which have conduced to my disclosure of this conspiracy, and my detestation of the transaction?—I had fallen into the snare—I was acted upon by a certain degree of fear—I speak before friends—I was distracted—I was flattered—I might have been—nay I was, deceived—but to turn deceiver—no, Mr. Gurney, the moment the artful woman outwitted herself into a belief that she had secured an accomplice in her plot, and endeavoured to press me into her service against a gentleman who, before I had heard her name or seen her face, had treated me as you had done—the thing was at an end.”

I cannot express how much I felt gratified at this declaration; I had always liked Sniggs, and had made no concealment from him of my prepossession in his favour, and I was vexed and uncomfortable when I found him ungrateful and insincere. He had now acquitted himself, and stood once more in his old place in my esteem; and I could not help again holding out my hand to him at the conclusion of his denunciation of the Brandyball iniquity, as a token of my satisfaction at the course he had pursued.

“I admit the difficulties in which we were placed, Mr. Sniggs,” said I, “and all I shall beg you to do is to forget whatever may have been unpleasant to either of us in the past affair. It is now my duty to look forward and to see what is the best and wisest course to pursue.”

“I have, of course,” said Sniggs, “no right to advise nor to meddle in your family concerns—I have eased my conscience, and will take my leave, observing only, that my services in any way professional or unprofessional are at your command.”

Sniggs was really affected, and as is the case where the feeling is strong and genuine, was anxious to say as little as possible; he was—to put the case plainly and in a

homely way—ashamed of himself; ashamed, partly because he had suffered himself to be alienated from the family through which he had become acquainted with Cuthbert, and partly because he had been too evidently made the dupe of the “lady,” of whom, be it remembered, when he was entirely in *our* interest, he intimated with one of his cunningest looks, that he “knew something.”

The question which now had to be debated by Wells and myself were these—whether I should join Nubley at Bath, and unite my force with his, in order, if possible, to prevent the marriage, leaving Jane at Ashmead, but communicating to Harriet the *real* cause of my journey; or whether she should be forthwith apprised of the projected destruction of our hopes and fortunes; for it became, as I have before said, no longer a point of mere affection and anxiety to save Cuthbert from misery and dependence, but a matter of serious consideration in a financial point of view. Cuthbert was the prop

“that did sustain my house;”

and every day's expenditure on my present scale of establishment was involving me in difficulties whence, if his liberality were, as it naturally would be, diverted into other channels, nothing could extricate me.

Tenderness for her feelings and an anxiety not to disturb the serenity of her mind, were to me powerful motives for not apprising my poor sensitive kind-hearted wife of the real state of the case; but Wells, who looked at these considerations with a greater share of philosophy than myself, founded perhaps upon the fact that he had been married ten times as long as I had, and that the sufferer whom I had wanted to save, was his daughter, pooh-poohed away my delicacy, and, wisely enough, perhaps, (although I confess I thought at the time somewhat harshly)—expressed a decided opinion that the time for concealment was past; and that, if I felt my going to Nubley, and with Nubley to Cuthbert, were essential to the well-doing of the family, I ought to go—and not only go, but plainly tell my wife the reasons for my journey, as well as all the circumstances con-

nected with Sniggs's recantation, the attempt of Mrs. Brandyball, and the design of abstracting poor Jane.

This latter scheme, however much it betrayed the artifices and treachery of Mrs. Brandyball, and however much I should, and I knew my wife would, have regretted the separation from the girl, whose estimable qualities, in spite of bad education and example, were daily developing themselves, was one which I felt it would be necessary that we should eventually be compelled to acquiesce in. My means, when thrown upon my own resources, would not permit me to increase my family circle by other means than those which might naturally be supposed to make periodical additions to it; and although as a temporary arrangement, under totally different circumstances, our having little Jenny with us was most agreeable, it became a question whether, if I did undertake the expedition to Bath, I ought not so far even immediately to adopt the lady's views as to make the poor child my unwilling companion upon the occasion.

After a certain time passed in deliberation, it was decided that Harriet should be made acquainted with all the circumstances, and that her opinion, as well as that of her mother, should be taken as to the necessity of my proceeding to Bath, inasmuch as it appeared by Nubley's letter that he himself proposed taking some active measure the morning after he had written, in which case I should arrive too late to be of any use. I knew the moment this course was agreed upon that I should not be permitted to go. Harriet, born and bred in Blissford, had a horror of a journey, and, although she had so heroically undertaken one herself, full of peril and enterprise for *my* sake, it might have been that the circumstances attending that very expedition had impressed her with the dread she always evinced when anything like my going anywhere was proposed. For this her reverend father called her foolish. I loved her for it, for I thought it affectionate.

In the meanwhile Mr. Nubley, whose benevolence was of the active sort, and who did infinitely more than he ever professed, had no sooner breakfasted than he proceeded to Montpelier, having first earnestly questioned his servant as

to his certainty that Hutton had given him the information about the wedding which he had reported. When he reached the house, Cuthbert was not visible; this, if his anxiety to be at work had not hurried his call, Nubley might have anticipated. The lady was, however, up and down, and dressed in the most captivating morning costume, borrowed, as one might have supposed, from the frontispiece of one of the magazines of fashion. A cap and curls, which would have suited a girl of sixteen, graced her head, and a tight-fitting dove-coloured silk dress encased her comely figure; and as Nubley looked at her well-ringed fingers and a watch (which, upon the principle of the maid-servant in the farce of wearing all the finery she had in the world at once, she had suspended from a massive gold chain), he thought to himself, (at least it is to be hoped it went no further at the moment), "*That old fool has given her all these fine rattletraps.*"

To tell truth, according to Nubley's own account of the affair, it appeared very much as if Mrs. Brandyball had a strong suspicion that his appearance at the early hour at which he presented himself was somehow connected with a desire to counteract her favourite—indeed, her grand, great, and conclusive project: he saw, of course, her disinclination to facilitate an interview between him and Cuthbert. But Nubley was neither to be driven from his post, nor beaten from his determination. "I can wait, ma'am," said he, sitting himself down in a very comfortable arm-chair. "I know Cuthbert's habits: slow, ma'am—quiet, ma'am;—but I don't mind." Seeing that the "old friend" was immovable, she smiled, twiggled her ringlets with a perfect confidence that they would not come off, and said, with a sort of titter, "You shall know the moment he is ready to see you:" and went out of the door, scarcely wide enough to permit the exit, wriggling and giggling in all the security of having completely succeeded in "bagging her bird."

And so she had. It might appear incredible, but it is true, that poor Cuthbert really and truly believed that he had inspired that fair mountain of flesh with a sentimental attachment for him—that she loved him, and for himself

alone. These infatuations are too common to permit the thing to be doubted; and, when Nubley began to talk to him on the subject, so far from either denying or extenuating the absurdity, he eloquently, for *him*, not only defended and justified the union, but enlarged upon its advantages and the comfort he should derive from the establishment of a domestic circle, in which he should always be secure of society and repose, and to which he could invite such of his friends and acquaintances as were worthy of such a favour. At the end of which very fine speech he shook Nubley by the hand in the most affectionate manner.

"*You are an old fool,*" thought Nubley. "But," said he, "why were you not satisfied at Ashmead? Why did you throw yourself into an entirely new—eh—connexion?—don't you see—eh?"

"Ashmead," said Cuthbert, "was no place for me. Gilbert's wife is all prejudice—he is hen-pecked—eh? I can't take the trouble to explain all that—eh—would wear me out;—but—no—here is a person who has no ties—no—eh—oh dear, dear! how my head aches!—but—what I mean is—she will be entirely devoted to *me*—and——"

"But," said Nubley, "of course I do not mean to make any indelicate inquiries. You and I have been so long connected in business, I may, perhaps, without offence, just ask one question—Did you not, when you came home and established yourself at Ashmead, give Gilbert reason to expect that the establishment there was to be supported at your charge?"

"Why," said Cuthbert, "I declare I do not quite recollect. I thought I should like to live there; and I rather fancy I said something of the kind: but the way in which they treated poor Tom——"

"Which," said Nubley, "you seem to have forgotten in particularly good time, since you have fixed your wedding-day so soon after his funeral."

"Ah!" said Cuthbert, "all *that*, as we know, is prejudice. Here in England they keep dead people for a week before they bury them; in India, you know, we pop them into the ground twelve hours after they die. I want com-

fort, support, and companionship; and it seems that the way in which I am domesticated with the exemplary Mrs. Brandyball here is giving cause of scandal."

"Of what?" said Nubley.

"Scandal," said Cuthbert, raising himself with considerable difficulty on his sofa. "My stay here has been thought improper—and in fact some of her pupils have left her school in consequence; and, finding her a most agreeable companion, I am bound to marry her, and marry her I will."

Having said which, the rallying of all his courage to pronounce the *dictum* proved too much for him, and he sank backwards on the pillow of his couch, in a state of most melancholy exhaustion.

"Yes," said Nubley, "but what is to become of Gilbert and his wife and child, and all that? There is an establishment set up at your desire, and by your own direction:—you marry this woman—you adopt altogether the children of your former wife—what is to happen to Gilbert?—*I should like to hear what you say to that.*"

"Gilbert?" said my brother; "why, what should happen to him?—he never did anything I asked him to do—he might, as you know, have been as rich as either of us; but he never would exert himself—never came out to me, after twenty separate invitations. Eh!—dear me—this fatigues me—but—well, and when I accidentally met him——"

"He *was* going out," said Nubley—"eh, don't you see?—*there I had you old fellow*—but what is that to the purpose? you came home—you put him up where he is—now, come—don't haggle and boggle. What do you mean to do for him?"

"Nothing, sir," said Cuthbert, "nothing. Mrs. Brandyball tells me that they hate me—laugh at me—despise me—and were delighted to get rid of me. Kitty—dear soul—the most ingenuous creature that ever breathed—says the same; so does Sniggs—an excellent man—as Mrs. Brandyball tells me."

"Tells ye!" said Nubley—"Gad!—why the deuce do you care for what anybody tells you?—can't you see with

your own eyes?—hear with your own ears?—walk with your own——”

“No, no,” said Cuthbert, “I can’t—I have neither nerve nor constitution for all that desperate exercise.”

“Then you will be made a fool of,” said Nubley—“a laughing-stock—a May-game! What! discard your brother, who loves you—who would sacrifice anything for you—for this brazen-faced B——”

“What?” said Cuthbert.

“——Brandyball,” said Nubley, “who knew nothing of you, nor you of her. All I can say is——”

“Mr. Nubley,” said Cuthbert, again raising himself in his *chaise longue*—“forgive me—I never took the liberty of making any observations upon your domestic *ménage*—you’ll forgive me, sir—may I ask you just to ring the bell?”

“To be sure,” said Nubley; and he rang the bell accordingly.

Hutton obeyed the mandate.

“If,” said Cuthbert, panting with excitement, “if Mr. Nubley has a carriage here, he is ready for it.”

“Carriage!” said Nubley; “not I—I came on what we used, as boys, to call Shanks’ mare my friend”

“Then, Hutton,” said Cuthbert, “Mr. Nubley is going—open the door.”

“*You are a d——d jackass!*” thought Mr. Nubley, in his way.

“Ass or not,” said Cuthbert——

“I say nothing, my dear friend,” said Nubley; “but this I *do* say, that you will repent of this: and so, after your extremely civil attention as to my retirement, I go. I wish you were rational; but you are not.”

“That, sir,” said Mrs. Brandyball, who had been listening to the dialogue in the next room, and now showed herself, “is a matter of opinion. I believe that the sentiments of a generous mind, devoting itself to the gratifying task of ameliorating the——”

“Whew!” said Nubley; “that won’t do with *me*, ma’am: I don’t understand all your fine figurative tom-foolery. My friend Cuthbert has been deluded, cheated, tricked, and

humbugged; and if he chooses to go to Old Nick with his eyes shut, that's his affair—mine is to try to open them”

“Well, then, Nubley,” said Cuthbert, in a tone of energy, and with a manner of which nobody who had ever seen him for the last twenty years would have thought him capable; “well, then, if that is your opinion, and that the course of argument you pursue, and the line of conduct you propose, I must desire your absence. I am convinced that what I have decided to do is essential to my comfort and happiness; and since you must know the truth, if you choose to come to my wedding next Thursday week, I have no doubt the future Mrs. Gurney will not object to your presence; but as that event is fixed, if you dislike it, eh!—Gad, you may stay away.”

And having concluded this prodigious announcement, he again fell back on the sofa, as little like a bridegroom as anything that ever was presented to observation.

“As an old friend of Mr. Gurney's,” said Mrs. Brandyball, “I certainly shall be extremely well pleased to receive Mr. Nubley, although, I must say, his conduct in this affair has not been quite in accordance with that generous sensibility which ordinarily regulates the intercourse of those whom earlier associations——”

“That will do, ma'am,” said Nubley; “take him, and have him all to yourself; but if I ever profane a church, or debase myself, by witnessing the ceremony, why, then——”

“This is too much,” said Mrs. Brandyball, firing up in the most tremendous manner: “please, sir, to recollect that this is *my* house, and I expect——”

“*Your* house, is it, ma'am?” said Nubley: “if I had known that, I certainly should not have set foot in it. I understood that *this* part of it, at least, was my friend Gurney's: but, I'm off: I leave you to the enjoyments you propose to yourselves, and——”

“Mercy on me!” cried Mrs. Brandyball, “dear Mr. Gurney has fainted.” And so he had: and while the lady was ringing for Hutton, cold water, Kitty, and all other imaginable restoratives, the eccentric Nubley took his hat and umbrella (for he prudently never walked without one), and quitted the purlieu of Montpelier.

All this, which came to my knowledge afterwards, was so completely decisive of our fate, that nobody could blame Nubley for writing the strongest possible letter to me, which I received on the morning following that upon which, under the advice and entreaties of Harriet, I had determined upon *not* going to Bath. Nubley, who was one of those determined, resolute friends, who are not to be put down or put out, without a considerable degree of trouble on the part of conspirators against a joint cause, resolved to remain another day at Bath, in order, first, to write a remonstrative letter to Cuthbert, arguing, not so much against the marriage, as against his total abandonment of me and Ashmead, which Mrs. Brandyball seemed to think essential to the completion of her triumph; and, secondly, to receive whatever letters might have come to Ashmead to his address, inasmuch as he calculated that it would be foolish to quit the place to which he had desired me to forward his "despatches," and let them hunt him, as it were, across the country.

The letter I received from him, stating that he should return to Blissford the next day, did not contain any description of the effects of his interview with my brother. He merely said he had seen him—that he seemed to be perfectly under the control of the Jezebel, as he called her—that the four-and-twenty hours' residence of Kitty under her roof had so completely changed the character of her external conduct, that she did not seem to consider it necessary even to affect anything like civility towards him; and moreover deploring, in the deepest terms of distress, the state of the whole concern. Of course what occurred at Bath reached me after the period at which it was resolved I should not go there; but Harriet's excitement and anger, mingled with her anxiety to keep poor Jane with us, and poor Jane's desire to stay, were altogether very painful. I really and truly did not know what to do. I had despatched my kind old friend's letters on that day as he had desired, and of course should have abstained from doing so the next day, if any had arrived, he having announced his proposed return, and, as I had seen, having failed altogether in the object of his mission.

Well, if it were so, I am equally obliged to him. There was an earnestness of intention and a singleness of mind in what he did, which could not fail to ensure my regard and esteem. All that vexes me in Harriet's view of the affair is, that she sees no goodness, no kindness, no attempt at conciliation in anything that anybody has done; all she looks at is, the huge, monstrous, gross injustice of Cuthbert's conduct, and the folly, madness, cruelty, &c. &c. &c., of all the measures he had taken; although, if the truth had been to be softened, I do really believe that Harriet, and what I call *my* ladies, meaning thereby the ladies of my family, did not quite so much sacrifice their own personal feelings, or devote themselves to his recreation and amusement, while he was staying here, as perhaps they might have done. That he was gone from us for ever, was most certain.

"Well," said Wells; "for *my* part I see nothing you have to reproach yourselves with; if every attention to his comfort, a perfect mastery of your house, and all that appertains to it, could content him——"

"Ay," said I, "but contenting and pleasing are different things: and—however, it is no use trying back upon this. I certainly feel extremely unhappy that circumstances should have so alienated from me the only relative I have in the world."

The uncertainty of worldly affairs is one of the favourite and most fruitful topics of writers, ancient and modern; and it was only to some extraordinary event, upon which nobody could calculate, that I might venture to look with any hope of averting the calamity, for such I could not but consider it, which impended. As for Harriet, as I had anticipated, the conflict in her mind was terrible; the passions and feelings which agitated her were so numerous and so violent, and so new to her, that it was quite impossible to discover which predominated. Anger, contempt, hatred, regret, and despair, affected her by turns, or rather, I might say, *en masse*, and the result was, that never having been similarly excited at any previous period of her existence, she was obliged to go to bed before dinner, while Jane passed the evening at her bedside, sobbing and crying—why or about what she hardly knew; except, as she might have

foreseen, that her removal from Ashmead would be one of the consequences of the marriage of her doting father-in-law.

I confess I felt anxious for Nubley's return, in hopes that I might extract more from him in conversation than from his letters, having made up my mind, at all events, to go to Cuthbert myself before my fate was finally sealed, and despairing as I did of producing any effect upon his settled resolution, avow my inability to remain at Ashmead without the continuance of his assistance, and (which I thought a reasonable design) suggest to him its adoption as his future residence. Harriet wondered how I could calmly talk of such a thing, or consider the case patiently, or the affair as finally settled. I knew that resistance to his will was useless, and thought that quiet acquiescence was, in such an extremity, the best tone to assume. I only postponed, as I have just said, the execution of my design till Nubley's return, which, however, did not occur so soon as we had been taught to expect. What delayed it, I shall perhaps be able to write down in my notes of to-morrow.

CHAPTER XIX.

I WAS up before the post arrived in Blissford, in order to wait and watch its arrival. There were several letters, the writers of which I knew by their caligraphy, and one or two which at any other time might have interested me; but the one single (there I am wrong, for it was double) letter for which my eyes eagerly searched was, when seen, the only one upon which I pounced with eagerness and almost agony. It was the one I so much dreaded, yet so much desired.

I broke the seal and read :—

“ Bath, Monday.

“ Dear Gilbert,—Strange things have happened. One of the letters which you forwarded to me, as I requested con-

tained some thundering news for Cuthbert—what it is, I cannot tell you, because it probably might involve the reputation of other people. I may, however say, that it is likely to prolong my stay here; it will take time to explain the particulars to your poor rickety brother who seems to me very likely to be killed with Mother Brandyball's kindness: as for the sincerity of her devotion to him, time will show that, and, rely upon it, I will not quit him without assuring myself that she is a very different sort of person from what I think, or opening his eyes to her character as I take it to be. I have not written to Mrs. N. because you can tell her of my stopping here, which will save double postage, and also spare her the trouble of reading a letter, which to a purblind beauty who is above wearing spectacles, is no joke.

“Give my love to your wife, and remember me to Jane, who is a jewel compared with her sister. I think, if I am not mistaken, I shall be able to make you stare before you are three days older. I'll do my best.

“Yours truly,

“N. NUBLEY.”

The perusal of this letter puzzled me exceedingly; I could (to use a colloquial phrase) make neither head nor tail of it

How would he surprise me?—what in the world connected with the affair *could* surprise me? still I could not help seeing that something upon which he relied as likely to be of service to us, detained him at Bath. Gratified by finding another straw to catch at, I resolved to live upon hope, and give my wife and father-in-law the benefit of a perusal of the old gentleman's letter. Considering the allusions made to Mrs. Nubley's imperfect vision and resolute abjuration of assistance, I thought it wiser merely to convey his excuses for not writing, verbally.

“Lauk, Mr. Gurney,” screamed Mrs. Nubley, “what a man you are! I believe Nubley is ashamed of writing—he—he—he!—he is such a giddy goose when he once gets away from me—there is no getting him back—he—he—he!”

The idea of poor old Mr. Nubley being likened to a giddy goose was nearly too much for my gravity.

"Oh," said Harriet, speaking graciously, in order to conceal or rather justify a smile,—“he will be quite safe.”

“Lauk, I don't know, dear,” said Mrs. N., “I don't think a young ladies' boarding-school is a safe place for a very susceptible gentleman—he—he—he!—you don't know my dear Nub.”

The fact is, that thirty or forty years before, Mrs. Nubley had begun to be exceedingly jealous of her dear Nubley, and, although he had grown far beyond the reach even of a suspicion of infidelity to his excellent spouse—she had gone on during the whole period, day after day, continuing her doubts and uncertainties, wholly unconscious of the march of Time or the effects of his incessant attentions to both herself and her feeble mate.

“Hope springs eternal in the human breast;”

and I confess that I derived, at least, a strong negative satisfaction from the old gentleman's letter. It was clear that something had occurred to strengthen the probability, or at least the possibility, of rescuing Cuthbert from the trammels of his hypocritical tyrant; and, upon re-reading the welcome epistle—especially the passage in which Nubley declined enlightening me further at the moment, lest he should “involve the reputation of other people”—I could not help fancying that he might have received such information regarding the lady as he considered likely to open my poor infatuated brother's eyes to the real character of the present arbitress of his fate. Something it was clear had occurred—and for the first time almost in my life I was feverishly anxious for the arrival of the next day's post, which might relieve me from my present state of suspense.

Upon a further examination of my morning's letters, I found one from an old friend, of whom I had heard nothing since we last parted, and of whom I never expected to hear what his epistle communicated. My correspondent was Daly; and although a very little time had elapsed since

his visit to Blissford, a most extraordinary change appeared to have taken place in his pursuits, prospects and principles; indeed, knowing the turn of his mind, and his affection for fun, I could scarcely make up my mind whether he were in jest or in earnest in his communication. One fact he had ascertained, that he was a widower—the fair, frail, fickle object of my early devotion was no more. She died in Ireland, whence she never returned after her separation from her husband; but in addition to this intelligence, Daly permitted me to understand that he was not likely long to remain in a state of sorrowing singleness; he more than hinted that his second marriage would be more advantageous in a pecuniary point of view than his first; but neither mentioned the name, age, nor circumstances of the lady; indeed there was a strange precision in his style of writing, and a mysterious solemnity in his hints and suggestions, which (as I presumed he meant they should do) puzzled me exceedingly: but the most puzzling parts of his allusions were those in which, speaking of himself, he said he was thankful to Providence for the great change which a short time had worked in him, and that—sinner as he had been—he now trusted he had obtained a true sense of his own weakness, and that he should improve the opportunity which had been afforded him in so blessed a manner, of knowing his own unworthiness.

Reading a man's letters is a very different thing from listening to his conversation. Upon paper, the same words which, if delivered *vivâ voce*, might be either serious or ironical, according to the tone and look and manner of the speaker, go for no more than they literally express; and when I found my volatile friend dealing in language such as I never had heard him employ, I was at a loss to comprehend what he really meant; and most assuredly, if I had set myself to guessing for a week, I never should have hit upon the real state of the case. I was, however, spared the trouble of long consideration by the unexpected arrival at Ashmead, at an early period of the day, of no less a personage than my old, worthy, and omniscient friend, Hull.

His appearance, so wholly unlooked for, startled while it pleased me. His kindness and hospitality in my earlier days

had made a due impression upon me, and I never ceased to esteem him—but knowing the activity of his movements, and his inextinguishable anxiety to be the expounder and explainer of everything of every sort that happened to be going on, I could not help associating in my mind his *impromptu* visit with some yet unknown circumstances connected with my own affairs, which he had thought of sufficient importance to justify a journey of seventy miles in order to communicate them.

Never did I see such an evergreen—or ever red—as my worthy friend; as for time or age, they had no more effect on him than an April shower would have upon Portland stone; nay, even the powder which, when I first knew him, whitened his hair, had been discarded, and the natural colour of his curls shone in all its pristine brownness: still, when he approached me, I felt more and more convinced that the mere pleasure of a visit to *me* did not altogether constitute its object.

“My dear friend,” said Hull, eyeing me through his glass—“why, what a fellow you are!—how well you are looking!—what a paradise you have got!—often have promised myself to come—heard much about it—eh—a certain friend of yours told me—but—pooh! pooh!—all stuff and nonsense—you know what I mean—eh?—Daly—all that—but never gave me a notion—splendid—magnificent—why, my dear friend, Stowe or Blenheim are nothing to it!”

“The cabin is convenient,” said I; with a pang which went to my heart, when I thought how frail my tenure of it was.

“Cabin—pooh! pooh!—don’t tell me—and Mrs. G.—eh?” said Hull, his large blue eyes twinkling with an expression of mingled interest and waggery—“eh?—never saw her—beautiful woman—child—surprising creature—eh?—come, come, no joke, I happen to know—lovely boy—eh?—don’t tell *me*—how is her father?”

“Quite well,” said I: “but is he an acquaintance of yours?”

“Acquaintance!” said Hull; “my dear sir, I have known him these forty years. His father was curate of Crumpleby, in Cheshire, where my great-aunt was born. Pooh! pooh!

I have a little property in the North—go there every year—vanish—abscond, and am absent—I happened to know all his relations.”

“I am sure he will be delighted to renew his acquaintance with you,” said I.

“My dear friend,” said Hull, “I don’t know *him*. When I say I know *him*, I speak of his connexions; but I know he is an excellent fellow—ay, and a remarkable good scholar. Did he ever tell you the story of his wedding-day and the soldiers?—He!—he!—he!”

Whereupon I stared, and Hull stuck his thumb into my ribs to make “assurance doubly sure,” and I again received the most certain conviction that my omniscient friend *was*—what some horrible infidels sometimes doubted—always correct in his facts, and authentic in his histories.

“You will meet Wells at dinner,” said I.

“My dear friend, I can’t stop to dine,” said Hull. “I am off to Portsmouth, where we last met, on most particular business—*most* particular; and *you* know what it is about.”

“I?” said I; “indeed, no.”

“Pooh! pooh!” said Hull; “don’t tell *me*—you know everything—eh?”

“Upon my word I do not,” said I in return.

“What!” exclaimed my friend, growing almost blue with excitement, “not know!—You don’t mean to say you don’t know? I’m going to Mr. Dingygreen, the agent, about matters in which you are deeply interested.”

The moment he uttered these words, I felt conscious that all my forebodings were to be verified, and that something connected with myself was actually mixed up with his visit.

“My dear friend,” said Hull, “haven’t you heard?”

“What?” said I.

“Why, my old friend Cuthbert, your brother, is utterly ruined. Pooh! pooh! you dog, you knew *that*?”

“Upon my honour, no,” said I.

“Why then,” said Hull, screwing up his mouth into a circular form, and reducing it to a size inconceivably minute, “I am afraid you must have wondered at what I have been saying; but you *do* know—eh?—I know you do—don’t tell *me*.”

"All I know of my brother," said I, "is, that he is at Bath, and on the verge of ruin I readily admit; but I was not prepared to hear that it was consummated. Has she really secured him?"

"She?" exclaimed Hull, "who is she? what d'y'e mean by she? My dear friend, you don't mean to tell me that you are in the dark—hasn't he written to you?"

"No," said I, falteringly, for I did not like to let ever Hull know how sadly I had been deprived of a fond and kind-hearted brother's affection and confidence, "he has told me nothing about it."

"Dear, dear!" said Hull, wiping his forehead, which exhibited signs of unseasonable heat, evidences of warmth of interest rather than of weather; "my dear Gurney, he is ruined—lost—done, or rather undone; instead of investing his money in the funds here, or in buying estates, or what not, he left it all in the hands of Messrs. Chipp, Rice, and Hicory, of Calcutta, and they have smashed. Cuthbert has not a shilling to bless himself with—not a penny."

Now came upon me the whole truth of Nubley's statements—now did I see the reasonableness of his mystery, and the justness of his apprehension lest he should involve the characters of respectable people by letting me into the secret—now did I see the fallacy of my hopes, that Mrs. Brandyball's reputation was the one of which he was so tender—and now, moreover, did I see, in the strongest possible colours, my own doom and destitution.

I suppose being of a candid disposition, and the countenance being the index of the mind, the expression of mine did not appear to Hull as conveying anything like a sense of obligation, or a feeling of gratitude, in return for the information with which he had favoured me, for he forthwith dressed his laughing face in a garb of sorrow, and, holding his glass in his hand at an angle of forty-five from his nose, made that sort of noise which people are in the habit of adopting when they are very sorry for having said or done, something which they ought not to have said or done, and which cannot be spelled or written, but which is produced by a sort of cluckling monosyllabic sound against the roof of the mouth of S't—s't. It is as useless to endeavour

to put it upon paper as it would be to reduce to writing the encouraging somethings which a coachman says to his horses when he performs a certain evolution with his tongue against his teeth, or sucks in a mouthful of air to give them a cheering "chirrup," something in the nature of whistling reversed.

At the moment when I saw Hull puzzled, I was puzzled also. I was quite undecided whether his apparent vexation at having abruptly imparted to me the ruin of my poor brother, was or was not more than counterbalanced by the delight he constitutionally felt at being the first bearer of the earliest intelligence of an event, the eventual effect of which is to a newsmonger not of the slightest importance; one feeling of my heart at the moment however could not be transcended,—poor Ashmead must be surrendered,—poor dear Cuthbert would fall into distress,—and in *that* there *was* one cheering and redeeming hope—I—yes—I myself, with my paltry, trumpery independence, might relieve him from embarrassment and perhaps even poverty; and, oh! how happy would Harriet be!—doubly happy, if that might happen, and we yet could rescue him from the besetting influence under which he was now labouring, and with our small pitance show our generous feelings towards the man *who*, with the best natural disposition in the world, had been fascinated away from us, and taught almost to hate and despise us.

Hull saw by my countenance that something was passing in my mind.

"My dear friend," said he, looking at me with his glass at his eye, "when I say Cuthbert is ruined, I don't mean to say that he will be a beggar, going about the streets holding out his hat for halfpence. Pooh! pooh! No:—I happen to know something about the matter. He may scrape a good deal out of the fire. I have known thousands of men—all intimate friends of my own—when I say thousands I mean two or three, who have smashed just like Chipp, Rice, and Hicory, and yet when everything was gone, there was always something left:—my dear friend don't tell *me*."

"I was not thinking of that," said I. "My brother, so long as I have a guinea in the world, shall be welcome to

half of it; I am thinking rather of the new connexion with which he has got entangled at Bath."

"I know," said Hull, winking diabolically, as I thought at the moment, "Mother Brandyball—always call her mother—eh?—knew her husband intimately—nearly forty years older than her, when they married—have danced her on my knee—and a beautiful baby she was."

Is it Ahasuerus or Methuselah? said I to myself, marveling to hear my excellent friend talk of having dandled the Gorgon Brandyball on his knee. Having played leap-frog with Doctor Johnson, or trundled a hoop with Sir Joseph Banks, would have been nothing to it.

"Never mind *her*," said Hull, "we can talk of *her* another time—Nubley is working there——"

"Why," said I, opening my eyes to their extreme width in astonishment, "how do *you* know that Nubley is there?"

"How!" exclaimed Hull, with a crow of exultation, "haven't I told you a hundred and fifty times that I have nothing in the world to do but to know everything?—besides, in this case I am rather interested."

"In which case?" said I, "will Cuthbert suffer very seriously?"

"My dear friend," said Hull, "that is at present a secret, or at least a doubt—nobody knows—at least very few—eh!—I am in it—besides I am personally concerned, I tell you—I have money depending."

This announcement certainly qualified my astonishment at his omniscience as affecting this particular business: however—as he no doubt meant it should—his intelligence had given an entirely new turn to my thoughts, and, in the midst of my apprehensions that a fall from our present position might be the result, and I did not think the chances against us much increased by the occurrence, seeing that I considered *our* fall finally settled by the Brandyball affair, I could not but feel an anticipation of the pleasure I should receive in proving to Cuthbert the sincerity and immutability of my affection, by offering him a share of my income, humble as it was. From Hull's manner I was convinced that he was sincere in his determination of not stopping to

dine, but I begged him to stay for luncheon, in order that I might introduce him to Harriet, and, if I could secure his attendance, get my father-in-law to be of the party; not more for the purpose of enlivening my guest than to give him another triumph over my never-ending doubt as to the universality of his acquaintance. In this last attempt, however, I failed, Wells was absent, but my wife was made acquainted with my friend, and we sat down *cosily*, and I thought of other days.

"Sweet spot, ma'am, this," said Hull; "in summer it must be lovely."

"You have a very nice place of your own, Hull," said I.

"Me!" exclaimed my friend; "pooh! pooh!—a box—a band-box—good garden—plenty of fruit—gooseberries—currants—but this!—pooh! it is Paradise."

I could scarcely refrain from irritating my old friend into a vindication of his apple-crop, which I knew I could have elicited, but I was afraid of Harriet, who, having heard of his peculiar sensitiveness with regard to the "bushels" of that popular fruit which loaded the trees of his Tusculum, I restrained myself—I almost repented that I had, for, much to my alarm, (my better half being present,) Hull began to talk of Daly; and when he *did* talk, his delight being to show how intimately he was acquainted with everybody's business, he generally became more communicative than I had any desire he should be, touching my earlier acquaintance with my faithless friend.

"You have heard of Daly?" said Hull, who according to his profession ate no luncheon, and merely went through the motions for sociability's sake, which gave him the more time for eloquence—"to be sure you have."

"Yes," said I falteringly.

"My dear friend, he is going to be married to a widow—pooh pooh, worth a million of money."

I gave him a look which I wished him to understand, expressive—at least I meant it to be so, of a desire not to touch upon the matrimonial part of Daly's history, for, although I had concealed nothing from my Harriet of any real importance, but on the contrary had told her the truth, it *might* be that I had not told her the *whole* truth, inasmuch as there were sundry incidental circumstances connected

with my youthful proceedings, her knowledge of which did not appear to me likely to increase her respect for my prudence, or elevate my friend Daly in her estimation. Hull, however, mistook the expression of my countenance, and evidently construed it into a sign of incredulity as to the amount of the intended Mrs. Daly's fortune, for the moment our eyes met, he continued—

"When I say a million, I mean probably twenty or thirty thousand pounds—and quite enough too. Poor Emma:—eh!—you dog!—she hasn't been dead more than five or six months, but Daly very soon got into a new connexion. I suppose, ma'am," added he, looking at Harriet, "you know all about *that*, eh?"

Harriet made an equivocal inclination of her head.

"His versatility is curious," continued Hull, who *would* talk, and would *not* eat; "to think that he should have taken to that line——"

I was rather astounded, and said really inquisitively, "What line?"

"The preaching," said Hull.

"What!" said I, "preaching?"

"Oh, you dog!" said Hull, "you know—don't tell me—he has got into what is called a connexion—in less than a week the whole thing was settled—when he came to town he sold his book of travels in Tomfoodledoo, or whatever foodledoo the place is called, which he told me you had seen, to an eminent publisher—he was then asked by Miss Somebody to give a lecture upon the probable effect of a missionary expedition to the scene of his labours! he did it—and the effect he produced was such, that—don't tell me—he was the very next day invited to become the pastor of a flock of independent Christians at Clapham—my dear friend, you'll find it fact—he got a three-and-sixpenny licence and started. Old Drone, of Hackney, lent him his pulpit—and Mrs. Waddlebom, the widow of a Wapping shipchandler, took to him so stoutly, that in less than five days after she first heard him, he won her heart."

"Daly a preacher!" said I.

"What *your* friend Daly!" exclaimed Harriet.

"Oh," said Hull—"he—he—told you of Daly—such a

man—macaroons—cows in cupboards, eh—don't you recollect, eh?"

"No," said I, "but you eat nothing ——"

"Nothing!" exclaimed Hull—"I have eaten pecks; but I say, Gilbert, d'ye remember the three legs of lamb and the spinach—eh?—don't you recollect the French Count and the ——"

"Yes," said I, interrupting him in a tone not likely to encourage the style he had adopted—"but with respect to Daly, how can he so suddenly have adopted this line—it is but a very short time since he was down here, and then he had certainly no idea of taking to that style of exhibition."

"My dear ma'am," said Hull, turning to my wife—"you know nothing of Gilbert's early friend, Daly,—pooh! pooh! such a fellow!—I have known him carry home a bag full of knockers and bells, when he has dined with *me*—thousands of signs—Red Lions and Green Dragons—all the same to him—and the Cow and the—eh?—he—he!"

This was too much; the reminiscences grew powerful and perilous—however, in order to save myself, I tried back upon our excellent friend's adoption of what might be called the clerical line.

"True," said Hull, "quite true—I tell you he preaches—"

"Well, but," said I, "it is less than three weeks since he was here."

"Versatility was always his delight," said Hull.

"Versatility!" said I; "yes, but the versatility which can convert a man from an author into an actor, and then into a parson ——"

"My dear friend," said Hull, "nothing so natural in the world—Daly was on his last legs—all gone—done, dished,—what was left?—nothing but the Tabernacle, and there, under the especial protection of his puritan publisher, he succeeded; and I give you my word—all true—hey?—you will find him the happy husband of a woman with I do *not* happen to know how much a year."

I was not particularly sorry to hear that Daly had fallen upon what Hull called his "last legs," but I certainly did once again begin to doubt the invariably correct history of

Hull, and then I took a fancy into my head that he might have cherished the idea of taking—if not to the church, to the conventicle, by finding my worthy father-in-law extremely comfortable, and carrying on the duties even of the Establishment with an agreeable air of gaiety. What had hit him which could have induced him to take to his present calling I certainly could not ascertain, but the visible result—I mean the captivation and capture of a rich and well-to-do widow—proved to me that, as far as worldly matters went, he had in a few days done much more than he or anybody else could have expected.

Having got this subject nearly over and out of the way, nobody can imagine the nervousness with which I was afflicted lest Hull should revert to the story of Daly's first wife—that was the point—and a point which, as I anticipated, he most particularly thought it facetious to hit.

"What a nice girl Emma Haines was!" said Hull.—Harriet looked strangely.

"Yes," said I, "very nice——"

"Strange chance, ma'am, that you were ever Mrs. Gilbert Gurney," said Hull, chuckling; "if it had not been for Daly's winning ways *I* never should have been here nor you neither; odd—curious to think upon what little things great things turn—eh? my dear ma'am, there he was, all over head and ears in love—true—eh? I happen to know, when—pooh! pooh! don't tell me—Daly went down to a—watering place and put his nose out of joint."

"Well," said I, with an affected indifference, "Mrs. Gurney knows all that, for I have told her the whole history; but his present position seems much more curious."

"Curious?" said Hull; "there never was such a thing. My dear friend, as I told you long ago—I happen to know—he is one of the cleverest dogs in the world; the moment the notion was given him of winning the widow, in one week he worked the scheme; and, however much you seem to doubt it, he is a preacher, and considered a good one, too, amongst the connexion. He is not slow in his movements—all touch and go; whether they are widows or not—eh? you dog—he! he! he!"

I wished him at Old Nick—my thoughts reverted to his

early ill treatment of me, and then I fell to thinking of his letter to me and its contents, and began more to understand its bearings. The word connexion, which I had taken merely to refer to the expected marriage, I found to combine also the spiritual connexion with some eccentric sect to which he had, *pro hâc vice*, attached himself.

As for Harriet, never having been accustomed to the ways and manners of society like that in which my worthy Hull had been so long and so constantly in the habit of moving, she was extremely pleased and even astonished by his manner; for dear Hull was the most gentle and gallant of men when there were ladies present, and the fellow of all others to speak of them kindly and justly when they were absent. He was a good creature, clever himself, and an admirer and appreciator of talent in others: but my wife had never seen what is called the world; and therefore as she could not exactly comprehend our visiter, she could not help wondering at him; and, to tell the truth, his observations and remarks kept me, as I had anticipated, in a state of so much nervous excitement, that I was not sorry when Harriet left us, having taken leave of her new old acquaintance earlier than she otherwise would have done, inasmuch as she had left Jane to entertain Mrs. Nubley, who could not be induced to come down to luncheon, when she heard there was a male visiter, because she was, "lauk, such a figure—he! he! he!"

When my wife had retired, and I saw Hull fidgetting to get away, I proposed walking with him down to the inn, whence he was to mount his "yellow and two," *en route*, to Portsmouth.

"My dear friend," said Hull, "let me beg of you not to think of such a thing—me—take you out of your house—pooh! pooh!—no: stay where you are—I beg——"

"I am going to the Rectory," said I. "I must have my walk, and on our way you will perhaps tell me—for I was delighted you did not mention anything before Harriet of the Indian business—what you really think the result of my poor brother's misfortune or indiscretion will be."

"I can tell you all I know here," said Hull. "I think things are not so bad as they are represented; and I

happen to know that I can pick up undoubted intelligence at Portsmouth. I'll write to you thence; but—now don't trouble yourself, my dear Gilbert, to walk. Mrs. Gurney is alone, and——”

“No,” said I, “she is not; she has two companions,—she will be busy—and the weather is fine, and I want to see Mrs. Wells; so, come along.”

“Upon my word,” said Hull, looking very serious—and it was surprising to see what a gloom he could throw into his usually joyous countenance—“it vexes me——”

“Come along,” said I, pushing my arm within his, and jocosely poking him along; “don't talk nonsense.”

“Nonsense?” said Hull; “my dear friend, I don't talk nonsense; I know that a man in your position must have a great many things to do—many affairs to look after—why should *I* break in upon you?”

“Many things to do?” said I; “I wish I had. I have nothing to do.”

“My dear friend, why *should* you have anything to do?” replied, or rather inquired, my extraordinary companion; “an independent man like *you*—don't tell me.”

“Well then,” said I, “if that be the case, and the position is an enviable one, which I assure you I do not acknowledge, what better use can I make of my time than in walking with you to the inn, where my appearance may, perhaps, have the effect of securing a pair of faster horses, and a more sprightly driver than you would otherwise get?”

“My dear fellow, I don't want fast horses,” said Hull, evidently soured by my pertinacious attention to his comfort; “it makes no difference to *me* whether I get to Portsmouth at five, or six, or seven, or eight—pooh! pooh!”

“If that's the case, Hull,” said I, “you might as well have stayed with us, and dined and slept.”

“Pooh! pooh!” answered he; “what do I want with sleep? Now *do* return home. Mrs. Gurney will hate me for taking you away.”

“Not she,” said I; and, upon a principle of opposition and contrariety, which might perhaps serve to illustrate the vileness of our nature, I resolved not to go back, because it appeared to me that Hull had some especial and particular

reason for wishing me not to go on. This fallibility of humanity shows itself universally; nobody is ever satisfied by seeing other people having things all their own way; from the jealousies and bickerings at Court, or in the Cabinet, to the commonest struggle in the street, the spirit is the same. As the great English censor says, speaking of some ministerial rivalry,

“So, if some dirty urchin dares encroach
On the hind foot-board of a hackney coach,
His playmate shows the envy of his mind
By bawling, Cut—cut—cut—cut—cut behind.”

In the present case Hull's anxiety evidently was to cut *me*; but I was “unshakeoffable,” and, as the French gentleman says, the more he tried to persuade me, the more I would not go back.

Finding me resolved, he became silent, and looked sad, as I thought; and, having revolved something in his mind, burst out with a strong desire to do himself the honour of calling at the Rectory, to drop a card for Wells, where he could leave me.

“But,” said I, “my dear Hull, we must actually pass the inn to go to the parsonage. I never saw you in such a worry before.”

“Oh! not I,” said Hull; “nothing worries *me*, pooh! pooh!” And hereabouts in the dialogue we reached the summit of the gentle acclivity, whence one again descends into Blissford, and I was about to entreat him to enlighten me a little more with regard to Mrs. Brandyball's early history, of which he had professed to know much, when I beheld a female of Brandyball dimensions, but considerably her senior, with a bright crimson cloak and fur tippet, a bonnet of remarkable size and shape, the relieving colour to the whole appendage being coquelicot of the most fiery tinge.

“Ha!” said I, “here is a stranger—a rarity in these parts!”

Hull did not without his glass distinctively perceive the approaching mass of humanity, but, having made use of his “preservers,” he uttered his customary “pooh! pooh!” in the

deepest possible grunt, and made one more effort at checking my progress with—"Now, pray don't come any further."

"Oh, come on," said I; "let us see the new arrival."

"Oh! arrival—pooh!" said Hull: "well never mind."

We neared the object, and when at the distance of about five or six yards, the lady puffing and blowing with the exertion of getting up the little hill, exclaimed, in a tone of the severest reproach—

"Oh, Tommy, Tommy! I thought you were never coming; there's the dinner a spiling, and gitting as cold as ice."

"Tommy!" said Hull, looking as fierce as a turkey-cock; "don't Tommy *me*." At the end of which speech, which brought them in closer contact, he gave her a glance expressive of rage at her rashness, and an earnest desire that she should submit to be "cut" as patiently as the little boys by the hackney-coachmen.

"What d'ye mean, Mr. Hull?" said the lady: "why do you order an early dinner, and say we shall enjoy ourselves—as nice a steak as ever was seen, and pickles and 'tatoes to match—and then go and stay away till near three o'clock?"

"My dear aunt," said Hull, "I could not help it——"

"Aunt! what d'ye mean by aunt, Tommy?" cried the lady. "I'm sure the gentleman must be quite shocked to hear you talk in this way."

"I am too glad, ma'am," said I, "to have the pleasure of making the acquaintance of any relation of my old friend."

"Relation!" almost screamed the lady.

"Pooh! pooh!" said Hull. "Go away, ma'am—I'm coming—go and get things ready. I'll be down directly——"

"Not I!" said the lady: "if I'm not good enough to walk down this little dirty place with you, I'm sure I'm not good enough to ride about in chaises with you all over the country: so come, no nonsense, give us your arm."

"My dear friend," said Hull, "good day—good day—

Don't come any further;—I—really—that's the worst of travelling with one's relations."

"Don't talk stuff, Tommy," said the lady: "you have been galivanting about—just like you—and I'm left to eat cold rump-steaks—"

"Galli what?" said Hull—"pooh! pooh!—hold your tongue."

Seeing the state of affairs, and having realized the suspicions which had, during the latter part of our walk, grown up in my mind, I thought it but fair to accede to his wish, and leave him in the quiet possession of his amiable friend; and accordingly I shook hands with him just at the milestone, and was bidding him farewell and bowing with the greatest ceremony to his travelling companion, when Wells, and his wife, and Bessy, made their appearance by emerging from a gate, which opened to the Town-field, and actually cut off the descending pair from the possibility of reaching their destination without passing them.

"Ha!" said I, "here's my father-in-law."

"Good bye," said Hull; "good bye—some other time—eh? My aunt is hungry—he!—I happen to know—pooh! pooh!"

Saying which he fidgetted past the coming trio, and, although he might have been extremely intimate with Wells's relations, neither the time nor circumstances seemed at all suitable to a furtherance of the acquaintance; although I found as usual that Hull had spoken the whole truth when he claimed a recollection of the Rector, who perfectly well remembered his name, and having been much edified by the reports of some of his dissertations upon the productions of the venerable Caxton and Co. many years before.

CHAPTER XX.

THE little flurry and bustle created in our quiet circle by the unexpected arrival, short stay, and hurried departure of

Hull, having subsided, Wells and I retired to the library—I used to call it *my* library, but I have left that off—to consider the probable results of the great misfortune which had unquestionably befallen my listless and improvident brother, and the best we could make of it was, the inevitable surrender of Ashmead; and such is the blessed elasticity of the human mind, that we had scarcely come to that conclusion, when Wells, who was naturally anxious to keep us near him, pointed out a small six-roomed house next door to Kittington's (and much about the same size), as one which would just suit us in our altered condition; the gardens ran parallel to each other, having each a straight gravelled walk with box edgings, with a twin arbour at the bottom of either, both exactly alike, and *dos-à-dos*, overlooking the windings of the river through the grassy meads. Well, what did it signify? A consciousness of right feeling, the certainty that I had a wife whom I loved, and who loved *me*, and an income which, however small, was certain, encouraged me in this view of things; and even so far did all the circumstances of my fall enter into my calculation, that I rejoiced in having formed a high, and justly high, opinion of the honest honourable man, who seemed under the circumstances destined to be my next-door neighbour.

What we very much speculated upon was, the effect this sudden reduction in his fortune, and consequent change in his circumstances, would produce upon Mrs. Brandyball, to whom, there could be no doubt, Cuthbert had, in a most extraordinary manner, attached himself: however, having already had some experience of Nubley's prudence and foresight, I agreed with my father-in-law to leave the issue to him, who, being on the spot, and having an influence over my brother, which, if not superior to the lady's, was at least based upon a long and intimate connexion with him, mercantile and personal, and to endeavour to pass a tranquil evening in the bosom of our family.

It is fortunate that circumstances sometimes occur, which, although of no particular importance personally to ourselves, are, from certain combinations and concatenations, rendered sufficiently interesting to divert our thoughts, at least for a time, from things which really prey upon the mind. At

this crisis of our fate an incident "turned up," to use my favourite expression, which unquestionably did affect at least one of our family party.

Poor Fanny Wells had been considerably excited in the early part of the day, just after the arrival of the post, by Sally Kerridge running suddenly into her room, and, bursting into tears, stammering out, half choked with grief,

"Oh, miss!—Miss Fanny!—oh, what is a transport, miss?"

"A transport!" said Fanny, "why you seem to be in a transport yourself, Kerridge."

"Oh no, ma'am, not I," sobbed the poor girl; "I wish I was—no—no—the Seahorse, Miss Fanny,—it's the Seahorse, Jibbs master."

"Does what?" said Fanny, to whom the energetic appeal was wholly unintelligible and incomprehensible.

"Oh Miss Fanny," continued the maid, "it is too bad; we have both been served alike—we have indeed, miss! Tom Lazenby has gone with the Captain abroad—but he says he is in a transport; does that mean that he has been transported, and can't come back, or is he gone of his own free will?—that's what I want to know. If he has done anything wrong, and they have sent him away, I can forgive him—but if he is gone involuntary, I never, never can."

And here poor Sally again vented her grief in another flood of sorrow.

"Here, miss—Miss Fanny," added she; "do, do read his letter—I cannot make it out."

Under what particular feeling Fanny consented on this, or on former occasions, to peruse Mr. Lazenby's epistles, I do not pretend to say; unless she was acted upon by that mysterious sympathy which is never quite destroyed, between a woman who *has* loved, and the object of her former affection; and which, in the present case, connected in her heart the destinies of the man with those of the master.

"Like the vase in which roses have once been distill'd;
You may break, you may ruin the vase if you will;
But the scent of the roses will hang round it still."

"Well, let me see," said Fanny; and accordingly read

“Transport Seahorse, Gibbs Master.

“Dear Sally—I don’t know what you will say when you hear that I am out upon the sea, having expected me back—and I am myself so sick that I cannot exemplify my position—the ship is what they call ‘pitching and tossing,’ but not the least like the game of that name at which I used to play in my juvenile days and I am mortifying myself because I have been conglomerated into such a predicament which has already taught me the meaning of Milton’s lines

‘Life’s like a ship in constant motion,
Sometimes high and sometimes low.’

But nevertheless I am disappointed—I heard of their cots and bowers and births and ensigns and companions—why *my* cot is a sack tied up to the top of the room, and the best bower they have, is an anchor—the ensign is a flag, the companion a staircase, the sheets are ropes; the births are deaths, and some of the men are in their shrouds all night; the yards instead of places for exercise are great masts put crosswise, and as for what they call Sterne, instead of being as I fancied it might be the Dean of St. Patrick’s who has written Humphry Clinker and the Sorrows of Werter, and is still alive in Glasgow, it is only the back part of the ship, quite the reverse of the head.

“Having just given this scratch of my position in course you will be exceedingly contumacious to know what brings me here—I will answer you fairly—my good nature. Captain Merman exemplified to me that I should inflict a fever on him if I would go with him and his better half as far as Spain, even if I did not stop, which would be at my option when we arrive at that town—so I insulted Susan who is a true fiend to both of us, what I should do, for I asked the captain as I did on the former occasion for ten minutes to consider—and Susan devised me by all means to go, for raisins which weighed with me but which are too numerous to insert in this place; and so I conformably excepted the office and here I am. If this epistle is not quite so correct as most of mine usually is, describe it all to the irregularity of the pillows which is waving about very much outside of the vessel.

"So my plan is, dear Sarah, to try my fortune a bit in this foreign land, which will postpone our hymnal conjugation for a few weeks, perhaps more; for Susan says she knows people who have been in Spain and like it; and she is very constructive in her views, and knows a little of everything.

"The only thing which vexes me is, that you do not know Susan.

'Black-eyed Susan came on board,'

as Shenstone says. Her mistress and she are as thick as thieves, and I think we shall make a good thing of it.

"I hope Miss Fanny has given over fretting about the Captain; he speaks in very genteel language about her when mistress is out of the way; but I think the Captain has caught a tarta. However, as for Miss Fanny, I hope she will not think anything more about him; for what's past cannot be recalled, and 'what's the use of sighing?' I'm all for Peter Pindar, who says,

'Sigh no more, ladies—ladies, sigh no more;
Men were deceivers ever.'

and to speak in the words of Addison, 'you can't make a silk pus out of a sow's ear,' 'you can't have more of a cat than her skin,' and 'you can't have a man beter than natur has made him.'

"I hope Captain Cavendish Lorimer has arrived at Blissford: he is the officer which I told you Rattan mentioned to me is to succeed Captain Merman, and I think well cackelated to irradiate the recollection of my master from the mind of your mistress—I suppose, if he has a smart insinuating servant, *my* chance will be but a bad one—however, dear Sarah, please yourself; if you find constancy a trouble, forget me; even if I lose your love I shall be sure of your steam, and that's a beautiful sentiment to cherish. Poor Susan is dreadfully subverted by sea-sickness; but I suppose we shall both mend as we get use to it—Old Nep is uncommon blustratious—only she is in her lady's cabin to be taken care of. I am very sorry for one thing, which is, that I cannot have the consolation of getting an anser to *this*; for I am out upon my travels, and don't know where I

shall be next, so do not fret yourself about *that*; dear Sarah; 'All's well that ends well,' as Julius Cæsar the great Greek said, when Mr. Ravilax shot him in the street at Portsmouth, which we have just left—no doubt we shall meet again one of these days.

"I enclose you a one pound note, dear Sarah, to make good what you have paid for me. I have no way to send you the wach, which I took for the man to riggleat it, so I keep *that* as a *suvanir*, and Susan wears it to keep it going till she restores it to you;—it goes remarkably well now. And so, dear Sarah, good bye:—if we go to the bottom of the brinny dip we shall never meet more in this world; but if we should be safe and prosperous, we may yet pass many days in what Dr. Watts calls 'reglar jollification'—so keep up your spirits, and with kind love to all friends at Blissford, believe me, dear Sarah, yours truly, in which Susan joins,

"T. LAZENBY."

"Well, miss," said Kerridge, when Fanny had finished reading it, "what do you think of *that*?"

"Why," said Fanny, "I don't know much of such histories; but as far as I can judge, I think that your lover is not likely to return soon. Susan, whoever she is, appears to have supplanted you."

"Only to think," said Kerridge, "after all he said to me!—like master, like man, I do believe."

"Pray do not talk in this manner," said Fanny: "I must beg, once for all, that upon no occasion to anybody you will ever mention the subject of Mr. Merman's conduct, or couple it with that of his servant."

"No, miss, I won't," said Sally; "but I'll be revenged on him. I will not take pyson, nor make a hole in the river: no,—he shall see what I will do;—to think of Susan, as he calls her, wearing my poor mother's watch to keep it going; it always went well enough before. Oh! Miss Fanny, isn't it too bad?"

"You see what he says in the letter, Kerridge," said Fanny:—

'Men were deceivers ever.' "

"Ah, that's true enough, miss!" said the gentle Sarah: "both of us have cause to know the truth of that."

"There again, Kerridge," interrupted the young lady; "just this moment I desired you never to couple our names or circumstances in this affair, and now——"

"Oh!" said Kerridge, "I beg a thousand pardons; I really don't know what I am saying, but I know what I will do."

"Do nothing rash," said Fanny. "A man who would treat you in the way he has done, is not worth regretting."

"No, ma'am," said Kerridge; "just like his master, he——"

"There," said Fanny, "that is the third time you have broken my injunction; now leave me: compose your spirits. Mamma, if she sees you, will wonder what has happened to you. Go away, and be reasonable."

"I will, Miss Fanny," said Sally. "I take example by you, and——"

A warning look sufficed this time to convey her young mistress's reproof for the fourth infraction of her command, and she quitted the room, having refolded the barbarous letter of Lazenby with the greatest care, and deposited it in some folds of her drapery very near her heart. Cleopatra could not have been more magnanimous; but letters, though they sting, do not always kill.

It may be, perhaps, as well for me here to explain the cause of my sister-in-law's exceeding anxiety that the name of Lieutenant Merman, or the circumstances of their very unsatisfactory acquaintance, should not be alluded to, inasmuch as it is generally understood that there is a melancholy pleasure derivable from a reference to past scenes of happiness, even though that happiness has been blighted, and inasmuch as Fanny Wells had, up to the then present moment, never harshly interdicted the subject. She did not encourage her maid in conversations regarding the Lieutenant, or the events inseparably connected with his name, because, although she had a feeling almost amounting to esteem for Kerridge, her sense of what was due to her character as her mistress, checked a course of proceeding which would perhaps, eventually, lead to an undue familiarity; and as Fanny, after Merman's final abdication, had no need of Kerridge's services in the way of ambassa-

dress or messenger, she merely suffered her to allude to scenes of other days and evenings, and, at most, permitted her to talk, without replying; inasmuch as Lazenby was always the main object of her lamentations and anxieties, and his master merely an accessory to the history.

But on this particular morning the interdict was issued—the name of Lieutenant Merman was never again to be breathed. Now for the motive to this sudden *veto* on the part of pretty Fan.

The Captain—or Lieutenant, as the case may be—Cavendish Lorimer, who had succeeded Merman in the command of the recruiting party at Blissford, and of whom Lazenby had spoken so favourably, had arrived the day before. Fanny had seen him, and “in truth he was a proper man.”

Churchill says—

“ Figure I own at first may give offence,
And harshly strike the eye's too curious sense ;
But when perfection of the mind breaks forth,
Humour's chaste sallies, judgment's solid worth,
When the pure genuine flame by nature taught
Springs into sense, and every action's thought,
Before such merit all objections fly.”

And Sheridan upholds the same doctrine, by declaring that the only difference in the success of an ugly lover and a handsome one, is six weeks in point of time; and this may be true to a certain extent; but on a girl like Fanny the imposing figure of a well-dressed soldier set off to the best advantage, whose countenance was exceedingly fine, whose features were perfectly regular, and whose air and manner were particularly graceful, makes a first impression which goes pretty deep into the mind, if not into the heart. Fanny, I say, had seen the new comer, and her father upon his avowed principle of “marrying off,” in the illustration of which he had recently failed so deplorably, lost not a moment in calling upon Captain Cavendish Lorimer, and offering him the hospitality of the Rectory, at a moment when his own little domestic arrangements could scarcely be supposed to be made.

Captain Cavendish Lorimer was exceedingly flattered by

such a mark of attention, and accepted with many acknowledgments the Rector's invitation to dinner. The set-out, as it is called, of Captain Lorimer was so decidedly superior to the establishment of his predecessor—two splendid horses and a newly-invented light gig, with a cross spring at its back, from which it depended, called a Tilbury (after the builder), one of which jaunty vehicles my father-in-law had never before seen, and a regular well-appointed groom, with white leathers and tops—elevated the new arrival to a vast height in the sporting Rector's estimation; and an accidental reference, in their first conversation, on the part of the Captain to his cousin Hurstperpoint (whom Wells knew to be an English Viscount) settled him in the very zenith of his favour.

"Dinner precisely at six," said the Rector: "you will excuse early hours, but——"

Captain Cavendish Lorimer bowed, as might be expected, and looked as if six o'clock were the hour of all others in the day, at which he rejoiced to dine.

Were there not great doings at the Rectory thereupon? No man could put down on his table a better dinner of its class, or bring up from his cellar better wine of its sort, than Wells; and Wells was resolved upon this occasion to do his best, for, be it observed, beyond his general disposition as to "marrying" his daughters, the circumstance of Fanny's desertion (after two pardons) of her fickle swain rendered it the great object of his life to show the *public* of Blissford, whom he affected to despise, that Fanny was an object of attraction, and worthy to be the wife of a better gentleman than Merman.

Having imparted the history of the invitation to Fanny, having lectured his cook, having made all his other arrangements tending to the perfection of his little feast, and having expatiated to her upon the style of man who was coming, Fanny considered it absolutely necessary on the instant to stop Kerridge's tongue as to Captain Cavendish Lorimer's predecessor; inasmuch as if this sort of tittle-tattle got about, Captain Cavendish Lorimer might take it into his head that Fanny was a Blissford belle, transferable to the attentions of the officer commanding the recruiting party

for the time being. Fanny was not vain, but the announcement of the intended visit flurried her—pleased her: it opened to her mind a hope of being revenged upon Lieutenant Merman, in a manner probably different from that in which Kerridge proposed to wreak her vengeance upon Lazenby; and she sat herself down before her glass, and bit her lips to make them red, and drew her white hand along her arched eyebrows to make them smooth, and twisted her ringlets round her taper fingers to make them curl, and spanned her waist, and smiled at herself, pleased with her little preparations for the havoc which she proposed to make with the heart of Captain Cavendish Lorimer.

Another little trick Miss Fanny played, which I found out only afterwards. Her sister Bessy, as soon as Kitty Falwasser was safely removed, had returned to the Rectory from Southampton. Now Bessy was grown to that age and size which, without qualifying her to be “out” in the London acceptance of the world, rendered her extremely attractive. She was rising sixteen; she had got out of her plumpness, about which, while *I* was courting—or courted, as the case may be—I used to rally her; the pinafore was discarded, and the style of her dress properly advanced; and a finer young woman I never saw in my life: such a pair of sloe-black eyes, to which a snow-white skin, with hair like the raven’s wing, afforded a striking contrast, are seldom to be found; and when it is recollected that the dear creature’s unworldliness was such, that the commonest appeal to her, in ordinary conversation, brightened up her fine pale countenance with a blush which, as the novel-writers would say, converted the lily into the rose, it is not very surprising that she had been noticed, when seen, in a manner extremely agreeable to herself, but not quite so satisfactory to Fanny, who, like all elder sisters who have not yet gone off, was by no means anxious of having a “rival near the throne.”

When Fanny suggested to her pa that the table would look much better if the number were even, and that Bessy could go to Ashmead and dine with Harriet, whom she knew would not come, and with Mrs. Nubley and little Jane; and that I, and her ma, and pa, and Captain Cavendish Lorimer, and herself would make the six, the worthy Rector

bade her count again ; when she found to her dismay that the absence of Bessy would cause the very oddness of numbers which she so much deplored. Wells, however, saw in a moment what Fanny meant, and as it was Fanny he wanted to dispose of, not only because, to use his own expression, it was *her* turn in the order of things, but on account of the circumstances of her disappointment, to which I have before so often alluded, he gave her one of his "comprehensive" looks, and said—"Yes, if Gurney comes here, Bessy had better go to Ashmead to keep Harriet company." What a thing it is to find such a good understanding in families !

After Wells had separated himself from his ladies he imparted to me the project of the day, and insisted upon my joining his party, which would relieve the awkwardness of a *tête-à-tête* after Mrs. Wells and Fanny had retired. I at first positively refused, alleging that in the present state of my mind society was anything but agreeable, and that I should be extremely disagreeable to a stranger : but he pressed it strongly upon me, and urged, with some truth, I believe, that if I had been left at home with Harriet through the evening, although Bessy and Jane, and even Mrs. Nubley might be there, I should not have had firmness or resolution enough to keep the secret of Cutbert's sudden impoverishment from her ; a point which he thought essential, more especially as he had made up his mind not to confide it to Mrs. Wells. At length I consented, having however first asked my dear Harriet's permission, which I not only received, but coupled with it an expression of her earnest desire that I should go, and bring home a full, true, and particular account of Captain Cavendish Lorimer, and of all his perfections, merits, and accomplishments, in praise of which papa had been so lavish. I thought, pending this little parley, that I saw Bessy's snowy bosom heaving more quickly than usual, and something not very unlike a tear standing in her sparkling eye ; but a moment's reflection, I suppose, told her that she was not "out," and therefore must stay where she was. Poor dear !—so she conquered her natural wish to be of the party and became tranquil.

I confess, upon reflection, that I did not regret this little

break-in upon our anxiety, for although Wells could not feel so deeply as I did under the circumstances, still the interest he naturally had in his eldest daughter's comfort and happiness must have awakened a certain degree of solicitude upon the point; not, however, sufficient, it was clear, to interfere with his endeavours to secure the comfort and happiness of his second child. Accordingly then, I promised to be with him at six precisely, and the carriage, which was to be sent to bring me back, was to convey dear bright-eyed Bessy to the Rectory, *after Captain Cavendish Lorimer was gone*. Poor Bessy! bless her little heart!

Harriet, who was all ingenuousness, and whose countenance, as I have before said, was truly the index of her mind, always appeared to me to be somewhat amused whenever her father was busied in his matrimonial speculations, and I could see that this enticing invitation of Captain Cavendish Lorimer brought to her mind all the similar proceedings at the Rectory, not only as connected with ourselves, but as to the previous designs of her reverend parent upon Lieutenant Merman in *her* behoof before even I had made my appearance, when, as it seemed for the first time, that distinguished officer had been transferred to Fanny. Before my departure for the Rectory I promised to give her a detailed history of all our proceedings on my return, and she promised, let it be never so late when I got home, to be awake to hear the news; and having made all these arrangements, I walked down at a quarter before six to my father-in-law's hospitable dwelling, and, in less than twenty minutes more, found myself in the drawing-room, having been introduced in due form to Captain Cavendish Lorimer.

A finer specimen of humanity I have rarely happened to see; a combination of curling black hair, bright expressive eyes, an aquiline nose, white teeth, dark whiskers, high forehead, fine figure, graceful manners, and unaffected good-humour, at once burst upon the spectator; and, in five minutes after my presentation to the new arrival, I admit that I felt strongly prepossessed in his favour. So much for personal appearance and first impressions. To be sure I had from habit associated in my mind the countenance and general aspect of Lieutenant Merman with the office

which Captain Cavendish Lorimer now filled in Blissford; and as I never concealed my aversion from that most odious of mortals, the real merits and advantages of his successor broke upon my sight with a satisfaction not unmixed with surprise: certainly the Captain's *contour* was most agreeable.

The moment I glanced my eye at sister Fan, I saw that upon this particular point we were, at all events, *d'accord*; nor could I help remarking the studious care with which, aided by the deserted disconsolate Kerridge, the dear girl had brought all her points to bear upon the enemy. Every attraction of face and figure had been well studied, and, like the heroine of my early muse in the infernal farce, which always and for ever rose in judgment against me, she—

“Clearly was dress'd for heart-slaughter;”

and, in “truth,” (as Sandy has it,) the performance was highly creditable to both mistress and maid; to say nothing of Nature, who had done her handiwork remarkably well.

There is something soft and subdued in the conversation of strangers before dinner, which I suspect is meant to pass for great refinement and delicacy, but which wears off delightfully as the day wears on; and we were so extremely mild and quiet in the moderated light of the drawing-room during the unpleasant quarter of an hour in question, that I had no opportunity of judging the mental superiority of our visitor over the departed Lieutenant, until the welcome words “Dinner is ready, if you please,” were uttered by my father-in-law's butler—as he was called because he wore no ivory—and Captain Cavendish Lorimer offered his arm to Mrs. Wells to lead her to the dining-parlour. I saw Wells was fidgetted—it would be impossible by that arrangement to get the new comer next to Fanny—but even with all his acknowledged anxiety upon the anti-Malthusian principle, he could not well change the established order of things, and therefore I took Fanny, Wells giving himself the benefit of the doubt which we had often discussed, and which I have before noted down, whether of the two positions the more favourable to the accomplishment of his object, is the

being next neighbour to the lady, or *vis-à-vis*. I have already registered my opinion, and I am sure, especially when so presentable a person as Captain Cavendish Lorimer is the subject, that *vis-à-vis* for the opening of the campaign is the more advantageous. When the acquaintance has grown into friendship, and it is considered meet that it should ripen into love, next-neighbouring is the thing against the world: but until so much of association has taken place as will render half-whisperings, and soft mutterings, and gentle hints, allowable, the telegraph system is the better; and I felt certain that a moment's reflection would convince the anxious parent, that the relative positions of the two extremely handsome persons then present was the more advantageous as regarded that which I knew to be his ulterior object.

As I glanced my eye over the board, and round the room, I saw that everything had been done to exalt the Rectory and its inmates in the opinion of its new visiter. The candelabrum (the design a fac-simile of Pompey's Pillar) which never made its appearance except upon state occasions, and was therefore always called by the *quasi* butler, the "Pompous Pillar," graced the centre of the table, while the dark polished sideboard groaned with every article of plate that belonged to the family, from flagons and cups, down to the Rector's silver spurs, which, coming under the general order to have out all the plate, lay resting amongst the rest of the ornaments.

Everything however went well; the dinner was excellent of its kind; the soup—the criterion of second-rate cookery—was capital; everything was hot and well dressed; and the affair was managed "all without hurry or bustle," but, as I pretty well knew, most certainly not "without care." The wine was in the best possible order, and Captain Cavendish Lorimer pronounced the champaign perfect. In fact, to do him justice, he praised everything; and as he warmed with the agreeable conversation of his host (who was as gay and lively as ever I saw him), became one of the most delightful companions I ever encountered. That one person of the party still entirely coincided in my opinion there could be little doubt, and the devoted and smiling

attention with which he listened to the slightest suggestion of the young lady, so different from the *brusquerie* of the absent red-fisted Lieutenant, had in the short space of the hour and a half during which the ladies remained with us, either rendered the said Lieutenant odious by comparison, or exiled him from her thoughts entirely.

Wells was so good a tactician, that finding the sort of person he had to deal with, and that Captain Cavendish Lorimer was a man of general information, and as it seemed of general accomplishments, he drew him out upon all the topics which came under discussion during the stay of Fanny and her mother, in order to make that impression upon his daughter's heart, which he was so anxious it should receive. Wells was clearly of the opinion that the gallant Captain, like Lamprias, became more eloquent and more agreeable, and showed off to greater advantage, as the grape-juice moderately circulated; and that while the cup travelled with the conversation, we might be merry and wise together—and until he gave the hint—contrary to the rule of some other establishments—Mrs. Wells dare not stir.

Upon the present occasion nobody seemed to wish to move. "I assure you," said Captain Cavendish Lorimer, "the initiation of to-day into the kindness and hospitality of Blissford, is most delightful; and during the stroll I have taken this morning, I have seen so many tempting bits for a sketcher, that as the spring opens, and the trees, by a strange inversion of nature begin to put on their clothing, I shall find plenty of amusement for my mornings."

"Do you draw, Captain Lorimer?" said Fanny.

"In my way, Miss Wells," replied the Captain; "I am no very great proficient, but I have made a few attempts which I shall be too proud to show you."

"You are very good," replied Fanny.

"I honestly confess time does not hang very heavy upon my hands, even when alone," continued our agreeable friend; "music and drawing are great aids to men who are sometimes destined to solitude."

"What," said Wells, determined to have a catalogue of his qualifications published as soon as possible, "are you a musician too——?"

"The flute is my favourite instrument," replied the graceful Crichton.

"And do you sing?" said Fanny, with an expression of countenance which a hobbledehoy of seventeen could scarcely have mistaken.

"A little," replied our new friend.

In fact, it seemed that Captain Cavendish Lorimer was armed at all points; and nothing remained, as I saw Wells thought, but to put his various accomplishments to the test at as early a period as possible.

"Well, Captain Lorimer," said the Rector, "you will find under this humble roof all materials for drawing, instruments for playing, guns for shooting, bows, arrows, fishing-rods, spears, nets, a billiard table——"

As this inventory went on, I could not but recall all that had been said to *me* so short a time previous, and under somewhat similar circumstances; not that I believe Wells made all these tempting offers merely as baits to his trap, for he was inherently and constitutionally hospitable, and loved society—agreeable society if he could get it—but society at any rate.

——"And," added he—"luncheon at half-past one precisely, every day, Sunday excepted, when my duties occupy me more particularly. So, Captain Lorimer, here we *are* as you see, and if you like us as you find us, you will always find us the same."

"You are too good, sir," said Lorimer, bowing gracefully and graciously; "I shall be too happy to avail myself of your hospitality. As to billiards, I confess myself exceedingly fond of the game; do *you* play billiards, Miss Wells?"

"Oh no," said, Fanny; "sometimes in joke with papa."

"And then, Captain Lorimer," continued Wells, "if a rubber at whist in the evening *should* be agreeable——"

"A thousand thanks," said Lorimer.

"We can always make up a rubber—we have a worthy wight here who plays whist, billiards, flute, and everything else—our apothecary.

"My dear," said Mrs. Wells—"he——"

"My dear," replied the Rector, "there is nothing like having a man who will make up a rubber, or play billiards, or

accompany a song, or sing one—he is an universal utilitarian.”

“Mr. Sniggs, I presume,” said the Captain.

“Dear me !” exclaimed Mrs. Wells, “how do you know his name ?”

“Oh,” replied Captain Cavendish Lorimer, “I very soon find out the history of my *locale*.”

Fanny felt herself colouring up, and thinking of Merman.

“But in the present case no great credit is due to my sagacity or activity, for I had the pleasure of a visit from Mr. Sniggs almost immediately after the Rector left me.”

“Well,” said Mrs. Wells, “he may be a very good whist-player; but as for a child of mine——”

—— “My dear love,” said the Rector, interrupting, “we were only speaking of him as a whist-player.”

The Captain, who saw there was a difference of opinion as to the professional merits of Sniggs existing between his host and hostess, again said, addressing Fanny across the table with one of those teeth-showing smiles in which he rejoiced—

“Are *you* a whist-player, Miss Wells ?”

“No,” said Fanny, “I know very little of the game, and it is most disagreeable to *me* to think that by any mistake or indiscretion of mine I may involve my partner.”

“That’s kindly felt,” said Captain Cavendish Lorimer; “if all ladies in the world thought in the same way, there would be much more happiness in society.”

Fanny looked foolish, and Wells looked pleased; and I, whose spirits were not sufficiently good to mingle in the war of words, thought it was quite time for Mrs. Wells and Fanny to retire; for whether it was that I was “behind the scenes” or not, I cannot say; but it appeared to me, that Wells was playing his game so coarsely and even unskilfully, that unless Captain Cavendish Lorimer happened to be extremely dull, which he evidently was *not*, he must soon see through the whole plot. It certainly did not appear that he was as yet conscious of any scheme or device on the part of my father-in-law, for he gave in to all his suggestions with an amiable readiness which delighted the Rector, while his appeal to Fanny upon almost every subject started, made with

a respectful *empressement* to which she was wholly unaccustomed, satisfied her that if he were not the most delightful creature upon earth, Captain Cavendish Lorimer was certainly the best-bred, most elegant man she had ever met—"and so handsome, mamma!"

At length the parting "hem" was given, and the ladies prepared to unsettle themselves for the drawing-room.

"Have the billiard-room lighted," added Wells to his lady's directions—"we must have a rubber——"

"If," said Captain Cavendish Lorimer, who seemed in no degree desirous to conceal his accomplishments, "it would amuse you, Miss Wells, to look over my sketches, made in the course of two or three long tours, and you would take the trouble to order one of your servants to go over to my lodgings, my man will give him the *porte-feuille*."

"Oh, you are so good, Captain Lorimer," said Mrs. Wells.

"Oh dear," said Fanny, "a thousand thanks."

"But in that case, I am afraid I must give you some additional trouble," added Captain Cavendish Lorimer; "for in order to preserve my unfortunate performances from a general rummage, I keep the *porte-feuille* locked—I must therefore worry you with this ring, which contains the key that opens it."

Saying which, he drew from one of the fingers of a hand, quite the reverse of Merman's in appearance, a ring, containing a Bramah key, which presented itself on touching a spring; in the explanation of the machinery of which, as described by the gallant officer, it struck me Fanny took a very particular interest. After two or three experimental openings and shuttings, Fanny pronounced herself a proficient, and the ladies retired; Captain Cavendish Lorimer standing with the door in his hand bowing unutterable things.

"Come, Captain Lorimer," said the Rector, as the gallant officer concluded his duty—"let us draw round the fire and make ourselves snug, not exactly after the fashion of the worthy head of my college, who used to say—'Come boys, now let's be jolly, and no talking.' I am extremely

glad to see you, sir; Gurney put up that claret—and then we'll have a log on the fire, and a fresh bottle on the table."

"Charming daughter yours, Mr. Wells," said Lorimer, filling his glass, and bowing over it.

"Oh, you are very kind," said Wells, filling *his*; "they are good girls—our friend here can answer for one—the elder sister of Fanny, whom you see to-night."

"I can indeed," said I.

"Let's drink her health, Captain Lorimer," said the Rector, "and the young heir of Ashmead."

This, I confess, seemed to me to be carrying the joke a little too far. The idea of drinking the health of my poor infant as heir to a place, out of which, in all probability, we should all be turned in the course of the next week, appeared absurd in the highest degree; and more particularly absurd, because if what I felt certain would occur, *did* actually happen, our ejection and abandonment of the place would—if he chanced to recollect the present toast—go a considerable way towards exposing my flighty father-in-law's improvident mode of talking to our young cavalier.

"Ashmead," said Captain Lorimer, "is that the extremely pretty place on the rise of the hill just going out of the town?"

"Yes," said I.

"I was quite delighted with it," said the Captain; "in summer it must be perfectly beautiful."

"I shall be too happy if you will do me the honour of coming to look at it," said I—the same sickening feeling of doubt checking the earnestness of my invitation.

"I say Gurney," said the Rector, "let us send and ask Sniggs to come over, he will be delightful; he really is an agreeable companion, and a dab at billiards."

I made no objection—of course the Captain made none—and a message was sent to Sniggs requesting the pleasure of his company, *if* he were disengaged. If? as if under the circumstances—the reconciliatory character of the bidding, the knowledge that Captain Cavendish Lorimer dined at the Rectory, (a fact of which he was sure to be informed,) the opportunity of making his way, and though last, not

least, the certainty of an agreeable evening, there could possibly exist the slightest doubt as to the answer—it was, in fact, a command, and accordingly was promptly obeyed; so that before the then circulating bottle was empty, Sniggs made a fourth round the fire, and the party seemed well disposed to remain for a certain time where they were.

Wells, however, who loved snugness and conviviality, never lost sight of his great end. Comfortable as we were, I in a moment saw that “one bottle more” would close the performances in the dining-room, at least for that session. He saw that Fan had made an effect on Captain Cavendish Lorimer, and that Captain Cavendish Lorimer had in a very short time gone a long way towards superseding his gallant predecessor; so, when ordering the next bottle of claret he announced it to be the last, adding with a nudge to his guest—

“We will go to the ladies after *this*; but it is a custom in this house, Captain Lorimer, to have a snug re-union a little later in the evening, and that is my reason for dining early; coffee—tea—*chasse*—a game at billiards—a rubber at whist—a little music or whatever is going on—and then a little bit of snug supper—cold or hot, as the case may be; eat or not as you like; sociability is the thing; I learned it as a boy from my excellent father—all cozy—shut out the world—no servants—no fuss—and a small taste of what we used in my boyish days to call ‘mixture’—not such as my friend Sniggs would prescribe—but a little hot, strong, and sweet—just every one after his own fancy, and a bit of quiet chat—what d’ye think, Captain?”

“It seems a most admirable arrangement,” said the Captain; “and I do assure you, my dear sir, you will find me one of the most accommodating of human beings whenever you make suggestions so exceedingly agreeable.”

I looked at my father-in-law, and the new comer, and could not help recollecting, although I certainly did not regret, the brandy-and-water which I drank in the very same room on that night which sealed my earthly destiny with my beloved Harriet. Wells, who was in high spirits, and anxious to render himself, his house, and everything that

was his, agreeable to the splendid acquisition he had made, took the lead, and went a-head of Sniggs, who, however much pleased with the olive branch which the Rector had held out in the shape of an invitation, still evidently felt that kind of awkwardness and shyness which hangs over a man who has, to say the best of it, played a rather equivocal part. Wells had told us all his favourite stories, new and entertaining in the highest degree to the new arrival, and by *him* received with great delight. In short, I saw that my father-in-law had planted his first hit with great effect, and that Captain Cavendish Lorimer was, to use an expression which the late Tom Falwasser would have adopted with regard to linnets, finches, sparrows, and such small deer, "limed;" and it must be owned that this was the *limæ labor* in which Wells did mightily rejoice.

Time flew; but Mrs. Wells, who left the management of such matters as she knew were in hand at this present juncture, entirely in charge of the Rector, never ventured to send any summons to coffee or tea; nor was it till Wells thought the moment had arrived at which he ought to repair to the drawing-room, that he rang the bell and inquired if coffee were ready? The simple affirmative monosyllable settled the business, and after a very slight delay we proceeded to do what is called "joining the ladies."

"Oh," cried Fanny, as Captain Cavendish Lorimer entered the room, "I never saw such loves of drawings, Captain Lorimer, really they are perfectly beautiful."

"They are like the places they represent, I believe," said the Captain, with profound humility.

"And," said Fanny, giving him back his ring with the key in it, which she had kept cuddled up in her hand till it was quite hot, "here is your dear beautiful little ring."

"It is very convenient," said Captain Cavendish Lorimer, "it lies in so small a compass."

And then Captain Cavendish Lorimer took coffee, sipped it, and put the cup down gently upon a small mosaic table and drank no more; and then Wells looked at his wife, and made a family signal that the coffee was evidently ill-made, because Captain Cavendish Lorimer could not finish it; and then my dear mother-in-law was just on the point of going

into a discussion on the art of coffee-making, and the reason why it could not be made good if the coffee-pot were not one thing, or the biggin not another thing, and so on, but a sudden check, in the way of a sharp contraction of brow on the part of her spouse, stopped *that*—and Captain Cavendish Lorimer slyly stealing away from the abandoned cup, sat himself on a sofa beside Fanny, and drank his *chasse* of Curaçao as if he had regularly qualified for it.

Sniggs and I strolled into the billiard-room, which, as I have already remarked, opened into the drawing-room, and began knocking the balls about. The Captain, attracted by the sound, left Fanny's side and joined us.

"Pshaw," said Wells, "that silly fellow Sniggs is so fond of billiards—dear me—why not have waited? Captain Lorimer, do you take tea?"

"None, thank you," said Captain Cavendish Lorimer, "I am all for one game at billiards: I haven't played a game these ten months."

And so Sniggs, as champion, was put forth to compete with the stranger.

"Fanny, dear," said Wells, "go and mark; make yourself useful."

Fanny hesitatingly, but I believe "nothing loth," proceeded to the marker's place, to which her father had consigned her, in order that she might at once evince a due degree of interest in the success of Captain Cavendish Lorimer, and exhibit the graces of her pretty figure, and the delicacy of her very white hand in the performance of a duty not in the abstract altogether feminine in its character, but with which, knowing whom I had to deal with, I dare not interfere.

The game proceeded rapidly—Sniggs went on manfully and scored a few, but all in vain; Captain Cavendish Lorimer stretched himself out—screwed—twisted—and did everything that chalk and genius combined could possibly achieve,

"And soon all the cannons
Were Major Mac Shannon's."

In fact, off the balls when he once got them, did Captain Cavendish Lorimer win the game.

"I have no chance," said Sniggs, "none in the least."

"Nobody else *can* have any," said Wells; "for you beat everybody here: so, come Fan, let us have a little music."

I saw Captain Cavendish Lorimer at this suggestion look rather disconcerted, and the doubting hesitation of Fanny did not, as I thought, meet with quite so much persuasion as might be expected. For the information of those who *know* the regular course of proceeding adopted by country Misses in such a case, it is of no use writing down an elaborate account of the screwing up or down of the creaking music-stool, the rumpling over a hundred songs as if to look out, off-hand, for something to sing, the said girl having made up her mind to sing no other than the one at which she has been thumping and screaming all the morning: humming and ha'aing during the pretended search, and talking of a cold, and declaring that she can't—really—and a thousand other little essays of rustic affectation, which I saw operated upon the Captain, not exactly as my father-in-law could have wished. However, at last Fanny *would* sing a duet if Captain Cavendish Lorimer would take a part. "Oh! too happy," was the answer, and out they came with the beautiful English, "Oh! Nanny wilt thou gang with me!" a bit of sweet melody which will win the heart whenever it is heard; although, perhaps, in twenty years from this time it may never be heard at all.

Fanny sang her part well; the Captain's second was perfect; the expression he threw into the words thrilled through the poor girl's heart. I saw it, and I did not wonder, for I had never heard such amateur singing in my life. Sniggs was in raptures, and poor dear Mrs. Wells, who was far behind her spouse in worldliness, with all a mother's feeling, and wholly regardless of the object of the Captain's invitation, could not help saying to me, "Well, I *do* wish dear Bessy was here!" Sniggs after this very good-naturedly played an air, with variations, on the flute, and met with well-merited praise. Captain Cavendish Lorimer suggested to him some other subject, which he did not exactly recollect. Captain Cavendish Lorimer took up the instrument, and in explaining to our medical man what he meant, played the air he had in vain endeavoured to recall to his memory, in a

tone and style so perfectly beautiful, that Fanny sat entranced as she watched him, although, it must be admitted, that the handsomest countenance that ever was formed suffers most marvellously by the twist of the eyes and the screw of the mouth, which seem to be essential to the ejaculation of sweet sounds in such a performance.

However the impression was that another Crichton had come to Blissford, and we wondered and worshipped, and everything went sweetly well, until a quotation made by Captain Cavendish Lorimer gave affairs a turn infinitely more delightful to Wells, and, which I confess, startled *me*. The occasion was this :—

“I remember,” said Captain Cavendish Lorimer, “that air once haunted me. I heard it sung by an extremely charming girl, now dead ; but I declare there was something so fascinating in it to me, that I fell desperately in love with her before she had finished it.”

“What !” said Fanny archly, but as I believe innocently, “is there really such a thing as love at first sight.”

“This case,” said Captain Cavendish Lorimer, “was one of love at first *hearing* ; but you don’t doubt, Miss Wells, the possibility of the other. Don’t you know what *La Bruyère* says upon the subject ? ‘Love,’ says he, ‘seizes on us suddenly without giving warning, and our disposition or weakness favours the surprise : one glance, one look from the fair, fixes and determines us. Friendship, on the contrary, is a long time in forming ; it is of slow growth, through many trials and months of familiarity. How much wit, goodnature, indulgences ! how many good offices and civilities are required among friends to accomplish, in some years, what a lovely face or fair hand does in a minute !’

Fanny looked foolish again—Wells again was pleased, and Captain Cavendish Lorimer again showed his white teeth most complacently. Mrs. Wells looked at *me*, as much as to say, “Well, that’s pretty plain ;” and Sniggs, from a dark corner of the room, was reconnoitering the Captain with his glass.

The time had now arrived when the supper was announced, so called by the “butler,” but to which Wells wished never to give a specific name. The moment Mrs.

Wells whispered the soft intention to Captain Cavendish Lorimer, he appeared quite delighted; again offered her his arm, and again led her to the room which we seemed scarcely to have quitted. I again took Fanny.

"Isn't he delightful?" whispered she.

"Rather better than Merman," said I.

"Merman!" said she; and that was all she said; but the tone and manner settled it.

"Isn't he capital?" said Sniggs, who brought up the rear.

"Capital, indeed," said I.

And on we walked; and there I saw the *facsimile* of the never-to-be forgotten table—everything nice and snug—grilled fowl—broiled bones—oysters—potted things of sorts—pickles and other condiments, and the huge set of case bottles, all as usual; and Wells as agreeable as ever, the Captain delighted, Sniggs in better spirits, Fanny happy, her mother gay and cheerful, and everything *couleur de rose*.

Having despatched the edible part of the banquet, in came the huge reservoir of hot water, tumblers, sugar, lemons, and every device conducive to innocent conviviality, when the slightest possible hitch in our merriment occurred.

"What shall I give you, Captain Lorimer?" said Wells.

"What is in those bottles?" asked the Captain.

"That," said Wells, "is cherry-brandy."

"Oh!" said the Captain, bowing somewhat reverentially to the bottle, "that is rather beyond *me*. I suppose, Mr. Sniggs (addressing the unhappy apothecary who sat next him), you don't recommend cherry-brandy by way of a cure to your patients?"

"No, no," said Sniggs, falteringly, "certainly not."

And a dead silence followed. What Captain Cavendish Lorimer could have thought of the effect which his innocent and playful question produced, I do not presume to surmise; but it effectually damped poor Sniggs, who with the proverbial appropriativeness of small people, fancied the allusion personal to himself, and could not divest himself of the idea that the calamity which had befallen "Gunpowder Tom" had formed a subject of conversation before he arrived,

and that in all probability he had been invited on purpose to be affronted. This littleness in little minds, which I have before noticed, and which is so well illustrated by Scrub in the "Beaux' Stratagem," he could not conquer, and, consequently rolled himself up in his shell, and thereafter said nothing. To Wells this unsociability was no matter of regret, as it gave him an opportunity of rattling away in his best style; and when I saw the smoking kettle arrive, and the vast display for the "spirit-mingling," I said to myself, "now is my respectable connexion in his glory."

Soon after this, and when Captain Cavendish Lorimer, who to all the softer and more polished attributes of an agreeable companion, appeared to me to add a turn for conviviality, which in another twenty years, perhaps, may be considered wholly incompatible with grace and elegance, had filled his glass, the sound of wheels announced the arrival of the carriage, bringing home Bessy, and which was to carry me home. Fanny heard it as well as I, and I never saw anxiety and perturbation more strongly marked on a countenance than in hers the moment it struck upon her ears. The certainty that she had caught a heart, or that she *should* catch it, if nothing intervened to break the present link of the snare, was suddenly marred by the dread of Bessy's appearance in the dinner-parlour, where the social board was spread. I saw that she felt something decisive must be done to prevent the possibility of the young beauty's intrusion to the probable demolition of all she had done during the course of the evening, in the siege upon Captain Cavendish Lorimer's admiration and affection. She was ready for action in a moment, and, jumping up, said to her mother in an audible whisper—"Hadn't I better go and see if dear Bessy would like to come and take some wine and water?"

Mamma was going in a straightforward way to desire her to sit down, for that Bessy would not come in; but Wells, apprehending the real cause of Fan's solicitation to be the desire of "making assurance doubly sure," and unequivocally preventing the irruption, nodded his head somewhat significantly at his better half, and said, "No, no, let her go and see," which accordingly she did. And then did I not

hear the pattering of feet over head along the passages to the bed-rooms, and did it not remind me of the deciding night of my life ; and did not Captain Cavendish Lorimer look surprised at the mimic thunder which rolled over his head ? “ Ah ! ” thought I, “ little do you fancy the effect which that, to *you*, mysterious noise, has upon *me*. ” Wells saw that the Captain’s attention had been roused by the sound, and forthwith enlightened him on the subject, by remarking that in houses of that age and construction it was scarcely possible to stir without being heard, adding that the present move was occasioned by the return home of one of his little girls from her sister’s.

“ In the pause which Fanny’s departure seemed to have caused in the conversation, and which Sniggs, whatever he did with his glass, did not seem at all inclined to fill up, Mrs. Wells, by way of making talk, expressed a hope that Captain Cavendish Lorimer found the rooms at Hickson’s tolerably convenient.

“ Why, pretty well,” said the Captain smiling ; “ I cannot say *much* for them ; but it does not signify, for the short time I shall occupy them.”

“ Short time ? ” said Wells, in a tone of surprise, and I thought of disappointment ; “ I thought you were fixed here for some time.”

“ So I am,” said the Captain, “ but not *there*. I want more space, and my father’s exceeding liberality enables me to do as I like : for, although, he insists on my following up my profession and being a soldier for good and all, to the end of the chapter, his allowances are on a scale calculated to soften down all the little rubs and *désagréments* incidental to a military life when they *are* to be overcome. No ; I was looking at a very nice place about a quarter of a mile further down the river which I saw was to be let—a white house—with remarkably good stables, which is a great point with me. I forget what they call it.”

“ Slatfords ? ” said Mr. Wells, hesitatingly.

“ That is the name,” said the Captain. “ There is one room, a bow-windowed room, the view from which, in the summer, must be beautiful.”

"But, surely," said Wells, "that will be more of a house than you want, Captain Lorimer?"

"No," said the Captain, "I don't think so. I expect Mrs. Lorimer and the children here in a week or ten days, and I must get some place for them ready for their arrival."

The effect which these words produced upon the assembled party was something marvellous; it seemed as if sudden paralysis had seized the Rector and his wife—they sat, for the moment, transfixed. Sniggs looked at *me*—the Captain did not seem to notice the scene, and Wells was too much a man of the world to retain his fixed position more than an instant.

"Oh!" said the Rector, playfully, "I did not know you were a benedict, Captain; this is delightful—a family like yours will be indeed an acquisition in our quiet neighbourhood—umph—only think!"

"Yes," said Captain Cavendish Lorimer, "I have been married four years, and am the venerable parent of two daughters and a son."

"Well, to be sure!" said Mrs. Wells, recollecting the useless display of dinner, dessert, the pompous pillar, and all the rest of it, not to speak of her husband's cordial greetings and her daughter's winning smiles.

In the midst of this *embarras*, Fanny returned, having evidently been re-touching her curls, re-smoothing her eyebrows, and re-biting her lips, and resuming her seat, informed us that Bessy declined our offer of wine-and-water, and was gone to bed.

"She might just as well have come in here," said mamma.

"She is tired, ma," said Fan.

"Poor girl," said Wells.

"Pray, Captain Lorimer," said Fanny, "may I ask a great favour?"

"It is granted already, Miss Wells," said the Captain.

"Will you let me keep your beautiful drawings for an hour or two to-morrow to show them to my sister? I have been talking of them to her, and she is so anxious——"

"Oh! pray keep them as long as you like," said the

Captain. "I must, however, leave my talisman in your custody too." Saying which, the Captain once more drew from his finger the mystic ring, and handed it to his fair friend.

Wells saw the game poor Fanny was playing, and felt very anxious to put a stop to it, since it could be played to no end.

"Pray," said the Rector, "what do they ask for Slatford's."

"Two hundred a-year furnished," said the Captain, "if taken by the year, and five guineas a week by the week, and for the spring or summer. I don't think it dear."

"What!" said Fanny, who, in the true spirit of castle-building, saw the great comfort and convenience of a residence so near the Rectory, also mixed up in her mind with a vision of something she could scarcely tell what. "Are you going to take Slatfords, Captain Lorimer?"

"I think so," said the Captain. "I was very much pleased with it."

"But, I suppose," said Wells, "you would hardly venture without Mrs. Lorimer's concurrence?"

"Oh! I assure you," said the Captain, "I have no great fears of Fanny's difference of opinion."

This observation of her father's, and the Captain's answer, and the name of Fanny, puzzled my poor sister-in-law more than anything that had preceded it. She knew, by experience, how rapidly he made up marriages, and the time and place which he generally selected for the performance, and as the *dénouement* had occurred during a very short absence on her part, she was perfectly bewildered.

"What do you mean by Mrs. Lorimer?" said Fanny, looking very archly at the Captain.

"Why, my dear," said Wells, "Captain Lorimer is married, and expects his lady and family here next week; and, naturally enough, wants to find a house fit to receive them."

Fanny was not so good an actress as her father was an actor. There could be no doubt whatever as to what was passing in her mind at that moment; indeed, I was rejoiced

to find that she kept her place and position at table, for I was very apprehensive of a scene, in order to avoid which as much as possible, I announced the necessity of my getting home—it was growing late, and the weather was cold for the horses, and so on; upon which the Captain, looking at his watch, started from his seat, and declared that he did not think it had been eleven o'clock, instead of nearly one; and then began the ceremony of leave-taking and cloak-hunting, and all the rest of it, which ended, the Captain and Sniggs walked off to their separate destinations, and I remained for a few minutes behind the scenes after the performance was over, and when the actors appeared in their natural character.

"Well," said my mother-in-law, "who would have thought that that young man was married, and had a family?"

"Odd enough," said Wells. "It never occurred to me to ask the question."

"The Captain enjoyed himself," said I.

"I don't believe he is a Captain," said Fanny. "Being a Light-bob, he wears wings, so one can't tell."

I admired my sister-in-law's military knowledge.

"He is very handsome," said Mrs. Wells.

"La, ma," said Fanny; "what, with that long nose!"

"His nose is not longer," said Wells, "than it was before dinner, Fanny, and *then* you thought him remarkably handsome; but you must mind and send back the drawings after Bessy has seen them."

"Oh! hang his drawings!" said Fanny. "Bessy don't want to see them; besides, she can draw better herself—they are odious things."

"And his singing?" said I.

"His voice is well enough," said Fanny: "but that is not what I call singing."

"In short," said Wells, "he is a very odious fellow."

"No, I don't mean that, pa," said Fanny, "What I mean is—he—is——"

"Married," said I. "Come, Fanny, that's the truth."

"Well, I know it is the truth," said Fanny; "he is married, and who cares?"

"Never mind," said Wells, "let us get to bed: we have

had a very pleasant day, and have made a very pleasant acquaintance, and so good night to all."

"Good night, Gilbert," said Fanny. "All I think is, that it is very foolish for officers in the army to marry so young.—Good night!—love to Harriet."

And so brake we up this *sederunt*. And I honestly confess that I was not altogether sorry to find my worthy father-in-law caught in his own trap, after having baited it so sumptuously for Captain Cavendish Lorimer.

CHAPTER XXI.

WHEN the next, to me, dreadfully long, day had worn itself out, and neither Nubley, nor intelligence from him arrived, I really grew seriously uneasy, and Mrs. Nubley kept up a perpetual "lauking" about Mr. N. being "such a man!" and I made up my mind, let what might be the consequence, to start for Bath on the morrow, the moment after the post had arrived. Even that seemed a dreadful delay. Nubley's kindness of disposition, and earnestness of goodwill towards me, rendered the idea of neglectfulness on his part out of the question, and, as Harriet judiciously enough said, "If he had any thing to communicate, rely upon it he would write; if matters were desperate, and he could be of no use, he would return; and if your presence were necessary, or could be serviceable, he would send for you."

I admitted the cogency of my dear Harriet's reasoning, although she could only reason upon what she knew, and suffered myself to be amused by her sister Fanny with a proceeding which her favorite maid, Miss Sally Kerridge, had taken during the morning; having first asked her young mistress's advice upon the point, but having previously made up her own mind beyond the power of change or alteration. Fanny accepted the offer of counsellor, heard Kerridge's statement, satisfied herself as to the girl's wishes and inclination, and gave her decision in favour of the

proposed measure, which was no sooner pronounced than Sally proceeded to her reverend pastor and master, and, with all the blushes requisite upon such an occasion, and a smile that was half a tear, insinuated her desire that he would be good enough to publish the bans of matrimony between herself, the said Sally Kerridge, and William Waggle, the young baker, against whose winning ways and white jacket her *ci-devant* admirer Mr. Lazenby had so amicably given her warning.

Fanny gave us the history of this affair with a good deal of archness, and when Harriet, upon her "dignity" principle, I suppose, began censuring poor Sally Kerridge for the rapidity with which she had surrendered her heart to a new suitor, it struck me that Fanny did not join in the attack with any very great energy; but that, on the contrary, she reverted to the *mistake* of the preceding evening, as to Captain Cavendish Lorimer, with the full sense of Sally's being, in her *grade*, much better off than her young mistress. At all events, in her defence against our raillery upon the error under which she had laboured with regard to the benedict, she made no scruple of admitting that she *did* think him very delightful, when she saw no reason why she might *not* think so; but that now it was of no use for us to worry her, nor any for *her* to worry *herself*, and, of course, she thought no more about him. It may easily be imagined that it cost me no little effort to affect to take an interest in the current matters of Blissford, with a mind occupied not only with the important affairs in progress at Bath, but borne down by the struggle I had to maintain silence on the subject towards my wife, from whom I had scarcely before kept a secret since our marriage.

The longest day will have an end, and night again close in. Again the sun rose—again the post arrived, and amongst other communications, a very long letter from Nubley; so long, indeed, that I consider it better to put in my notes the essence of the communication, than its whole substance. Nubley received the announcement of the failure of the house of Chipps, Rice, and Hicory with great composure, because although his dealings with them had been various and extensive, he, with that worldly and prudential

activity as regarded nature's first law—self-preservation, had, upon quitting the “city of palaces,” washed his hands—to use his own phrase—of the whole concern, and, having a certain and well-founded faith in the funds of his native country, converted all the profits of his sultry exile into three per cent consols, which having purchased at a war price, with heavy taxes, an enormous army and an extensive navy, and the quartern loaf at eighteen pence halfpenny to help him, put him pretty much at his ease as times merited; all his landed property consisting of Chittagong, where his attempts at farming had been crowned with successes only to be equalled in their results by his experiment of letting the property to the Thompson family.

But, after having very tranquilly and philosophically perused the details of the Calcutta crash, the good, kind-hearted old man suddenly felt alarm lest Cuthbert might, either by the plausible persuasion of the partners, or, which seemed even more probable, by his own helplessness, and consequent apparent carelessness in the management of his affairs, have permitted his realised capital to remain in their charge, not altogether unmindful that twelve per cent., which the enterprising speculators were in the habit of giving for large deposits, was, in point of fact, a better return for capital, at least nominally, than three. The moment the idea struck him, out he went, and, as if invigorated by the warmth of his feelings, walked off to Montpelier to question his old friend and former partner upon this most interesting and vital topic. Arrived there, after some little delay, he was admitted to an audience with Cuthbert, but under a heavy fire of frowns from the Brandyball. This sort of shotted salute—after the fashion of olden times, when powder without ball was considered no compliment—Nubley bore with immoveable fortitude, although he was not exactly prepared to understand why the increased weight of displeasure was fulminated against him, till he discovered in the sequel that, at the moment of his arrival, a barber from Bath was in attendance upon Cuthbert, for the purpose, in the first place, of denuding his head of the few locks which time had turned to grey, and left, and of fitting on it in their place a gay, light, curly

wig, ample in its ringlets, and juvenile in its tint, in which he was to appear as bridegroom at the approaching ceremony.

It was pretty clear to me, from what Nubley wrote in his letter, that he must unconsciously have talked to Mrs. Brandybail about Samson and Delilah; but, whatever might have been the nature or character of his "oozings out," no doubt could remain of his having set the lady in an unquenchable flame of rage by his unexpected intrusion at what when she was fine, she called her seminary. Cuthbert himself was considerably annoyed to be detected by his old partner as he was, or nearly was, in the fitting on of a matrimonial head-dress, knowing, as he did, the opinion which the said old partner entertained of the new partnership into which he was about to enter, or at least of the person about to be admitted into the firm, was certainly not altogether agreeable.

"You had better leave the room for the present," said the lady to the *perruquier*; "the gentleman will not stay long, and you can come in again and finish by-and-by."

"Why, as to the matter of that," said Nubley, "I am not quite so sure that my visit to-day *will* be so short, for I have a great deal to say to my friend on business."

"Oh, Nubley," said Cuthbert, "don't talk of business—eh?—no—I have quitted business, and done with everything connected with it."

"You have, indeed!" said Nubley: "and finely you have done! However, you *must* listen.—*I wish that old Jezebel would go and leave us.*"

"Mr. Nubley," said Mrs. Brandyball, "the inadvertency of your manner, and the unconscious communication of your private ideas, sufficiently assure me of your opinion of me, and of your anxiety to prejudice Mr. Cuthbert against me. but it is too late; the die is cast; and therefore you will forgive me for merely insinuating that, however much your efforts may contribute to irritate Mr. Cuthbert's gentle temper and disorder his tranquillity, they will produce no change in his determination."

"May be not, ma'am," said Nubley; "but that won't stop my tongue, nor hurry my departure."

"My dear friend," said Cuthbert, evidently disappointed in an attempt at scratching his head (a favourite *délassement* of his) by the intervention of the newly-adapted brutus, of the presence of which he was perfectly unconscious; "do not speak harshly or unkindly to a lady for whom I have so high a regard, and who has made so many sacrifices for my comfort, who has given up so much for my sake, and who has been to me the kind and affectionate—eh, dear me!—affectionate dispenser of attentions and cares which my dearest relations, and those—eh, dear me!—those who ought to have bestowed upon me—oh, dear, dear!—pray do not make me talk."

"Dear Mr. Gurney, do not excite yourself," said Mrs. Brandyball. "Kitty, dear, where is the eau de Cologne?—Kitty——"

She called, but no Kitty answered; for it turned out that, during the stay of the peruquier, she had availed herself of his services in cutting and curling her hair into the likeness of something which she had seen in one of the prints of a "*Magasin de Modes*," which one of her dear friends, Miss Margaret Dryrubber, had brought to school.

"Eau de Cologne, ma'am!" said Nubley; "that won't do: I am come here to bring our old friend to a sense of the state of his affairs."

"I really do *not* understand what you mean by our old friend," said Mrs. Brandyball. "Mr. Cuthbert Gurney is an old friend of *yours*, probably; but as I have not had the honour of his acquaintance for any very great length of time, it is more gratifying to me to feel conscious of the place I hold in his estimation."

"I don't want, ma'am," said Nubley, "to lower you in his estimation: I am not going to talk about you. It is of his own affairs I am about to speak. *I wonder if she will go now.*"

"Oh!" said Cuthbert, again fidgeting at his wig, "don't mind about my affairs now, Nubley—nothing can press—after my marriage—eh dear, eh dear!——"

"Will be too late," said Nubley, with increasing energy. "Why surely, Gurney, you can't expect much comfort in the match you are about to make, if you are not to have the power

of listening to a friend who wishes to make a communication. I tell you it is important—we must be alone. *I dare say that if old Sysigambis does go away, she'll clap her ear to the key-hole and listen—eh, don't you see?*”

The moment this “oozing out” had inspired old Sysigambis with the notion that she *might* perhaps advantageously overhear the dialogue in the mode unconsciously recommended to her notice by my poor non-retentive friend and advocate, she caught at the idea; and, from the earnestness of Nubley's manner, and his desire to be left alone with Cuthbert, imagining that what he had to say, which he was so unwilling to say while she was present, might be something which would be very important for her to hear, while she was *supposed to be absent*, she threw over her countenance that expression of amiability which was seldom used, except when the anxious parents of her few pupils came to visit their darlings; and which, while it conveyed to the solicitous visitors the most gratifying evidence of her own amiability, also led them to understand that all their nasty, little, cross, ill-conditioned, rude, riotous, and reckless darlings, were the most amiable, intelligent, industrious, and amiable creatures that ever drew breath. With one of these looks—which, to use Nubley's own words, “might have made one suppose that butter would not melt in her mouth,”—Mrs. Brandyball said, in a simper just playful enough to show three very white teeth (Bath made) between her ruby lips,—

“You don't imagine, Mr. Nubley, that any apprehension of a disunion between myself and our excellent friend could induce me to remain present at any period when a friend of your standing wished to make a confidential communication. Indeed, you mistake me; I am aware that upon occasions when an union of this sort is considered—and I admit not unnaturally—as an intrusion into a family, feelings are engendered, for which, in this particular case, there is no ground. I trust we shall know each other better before long, and in the mean time I retire; dear Cuthbert, is there anything you would like in the way of refreshment?”

“Eh dear? no;” said Cuthbert.

“*Dear devil!*”—thought Nubley

“Well,” said the lady, “I do not grow much in your

favour, I am afraid ; however, I must go and look after dear Kate and the hair-cutter, and when I may come back, ring the bell and let me know."

Saying which she swam out of the room in a gay and lively manner, waggling and wriggling herself clear of the doorposts, in a most graceful, and, to say truth, dexterous manner.

"Well," said Cuthbert, "what is the meaning of all this, my dear friend?—I—really—eh—never—interfered—oh dear, dear, my head!"

"That's the wig," said Nubley ; "what a goose you must be to clap your old cocoa-nut into a bird's nest ; why it don't become you ; if you are, like Etna, all fire within and snow at top—why don't you show your snow? however, what I am come to talk about has nothing to do with your marriage—because the dear woman who has just left us would, I am sure, be satisfied with love in a cottage—*it must be a big one*—eh—don't you see?—but—you must make up your mind to something."

"Eh—dear, dear, dear,"—said Cuthbert, "I have made up my mind to everything."

"Yes," said Nubley ; "but now, Gurney, supposing, instead of turning all you got with me, and after me, in Calcutta, into good safe old English stock—you had left all your gains in the hands of a great staring flaring house in Calcutta—to live upon remittances at their nice high rates of interest ; hey—if you had done that, old boy—what would you have said when you heard that the great staring flaring house had smashed?"

"How d'ye mean smashed?" said Cuthbert

"*Hit him there*," thought Nubley. "Why smashed," said the old gentleman—"don't you know the word?—suppose now, for instance, that most splendid firm in all the universe, Messrs. Chipps, Rice, Hicory, and Co., celebrated all over the universe from Chowringee to Vipary—eh—don't you see?—my old boy—*startle him now, eh!*—was to fail—when a man who loves twelve per cent better than three, chooses to leave his tot and tottle in their hands—eh?"

"Fail—eh—what! fail?"—said Cuthbert, pushing up his new wig ;—"what should make Chipps, Rice, and Hicory fail?"

"What?" said Nubley; "why, not being able to fulfil their engagements—don't you see?"

"It's an impossibility," said Cuthbert, raising himself upon his elbow, "it could not happen—Chipps, Rice, and Hicory fail? no."

"But, Cuthbert," said Nubley, "there's nothing impossible to Providence, as they tell us, but gunpowder ashes; suppose they *have* failed—and suppose I have got an account of the failure in *my* pocket."

"Then," said Cuthbert, with a deep sigh, and something like an effort to be agitated, "I am a beggar!"

"So you are, and I knew it," said Nubley: "you never would listen to my advice—no—there you were like a baby without leading-strings; gad—I believe if at any time of your life you had slipped down into a nullah four inches deep, and your head had been but three inches under water, you would have laid on your back and let yourself be drowned rather than make the slightest exertion:—*I wonder how he feels now?*"

"But," said Cuthbert, looking somewhat anxious, "are you sure?—eh—dear—or is it that you have come to tell me this in order to break off this marriage, which neither you nor Gilbert ever approved of."

"Break off?" said Nubley; "why should your break-down break off the marriage? I am sure, and I am quite sure, you are sure that this Mrs. Brandyball loves you for yourself alone; why else has she made all the sacrifices you talk of, why send away her pupils, why give up all her pursuits? It will be her pride and happiness to exert herself again for your advantage—and Kitty, dear thing, may assist her in it; don't you see? *I hope the old body is outside listening.*"

"This comes upon me as a great and sudden surprise," said Cuthbert; "I have heard nothing of it myself—and—eh—just give me that tumbler, Nubley; it quite upsets me—I don't understand—I—eh—eh dear."

"The fact is plain enough," said Nubley; "some seven or eight millions of rupees are wanting to settle the affairs of the firm; and a certain number of men, women, and children who, like yourself, are fond of high interest, are left to bite nothing but dust; however, my dear friend, so

long as I have a pice in my purse you shall never feel the effects of the blow."

"No," said Cuthbert, "no—I thank you warmly—kindly—eh—but I don't see—eh—I am all bewildered—it is such a change—eh—such an alteration—dear me, I am very hot, Nubley—eh—and are you sure?"

"Oh," replied Nubley, "here are the letters and documents; the announcement of the fact to you was forwarded to me, because you either forgot or neglected to leave your address in the country—the only question is, what you mean to do?—*that's the way I'll work him.*"

"But what *am* I to do?" said Cuthbert; "what will Gilbert do—eh? dear me."

"Gilbert," said Nubley, "oh! he will do well enough—what makes you think of *him*?—he has offended you—he has driven you away—eh?—*I wonder what he will say to that?*"

"Yes," said Cuthbert, "I have been driven away—eh—but still I never meant—but—what *is* to be done? I—really."

"Tell your story to your great favourite here, Mrs. Brandyball," said Nubley; "she is a woman of knowledge and experience, and, as you have confided your fate to her keeping, don't you see—eh?—that's what I should recommend—of course after your marriage you will remain here—no need of running away for the honeymoon—eh?—don't you know; and then keep quiet until we see what can be saved out of the ruins."

"Yes," said Cuthbert; "but then—dear, dear—ring the bell, my dear Nubley, for Hutton—two pulls—eh—if it is not too much trouble; but this really—and—eh."

And at the end of this flurry, poor Cuthbert sank back upon the sofa, and when Hutton came into the room and saw nothing above the back of the couch but the flowing curls with which his unhappy master had been decorated since he last quitted him, he hesitated as to what he was to do, and stood looking about him—

"in amazement lost;"

nor was it until Cuthbert's gentle and familiar bleat roused

him to a sense of his duty, that he dared approach the young head which he beheld on my brother's old shoulders.

"Some more eau de Cologne, Hutton," said Cuthbert; "and—eh dear—where is Mrs. Brandyball—and Kitty—and——"

"Yes," said Nubley, "they may as well know the particulars as far as I have them—besides it will save me the trouble of telling my story twice over."

"You need not be alarmed about *that*," said Mrs. Brandyball, entering the little cabinet with Kate; "you talk so loud, at least as it seems to us who are accustomed to Mr. Cuthbert's quietness, that we heard every word you said in the next room."

"And I'm sure nobody tried to listen," said Kate; "and so," continued the lady, "something bad has happened?"

"Yes," said Cuthbert, "yes—very bad—as Nubley tells me; eh—dear, dear—I—am ruined."

"I don't believe a word of it," said the lady; "it is a trumped-up story—it is a plot got up to frighten you out of your marriage and reduce you to be a dependant upon your charming brother and excellent friend: but the scheme will fail—I am quite aware of the attempt—but I tell you it will fail; for, even were it true as it is false, the change would make no change in *me*—to us, to me, and my dear Kate, should devolve the charge of cheering your existence and of providing the means of rendering you independent of the designing families at Blissford."

"Kind, amiable woman," said Cuthbert. Kate made two tears, and placed herself on the footstool by "pappy's" side, and kissed his hand.

"Good, affectionate child," said Cuthbert.

"*Cunning foxes*"—thought Nubley.

"If it is a scheme, eh, dear, dear," said Cuthbert to Nubley—"it is a very silly one—agitating me for no purpose."

"Scheme," said Nubley; "no, no—I am rather too old to play off jokes—the fact is the fact."

"So *you* say," said Kitty, pertly.

"*Impudent little minx*," thought my friend. "My dear young lady," said he, "I never say what I do not mean."

"No," said Kate, who could not resist the temptation of being saucy; "on the contrary you always *do* say what you mean."

"Nor," continued Nubley, "state that which I cannot prove; here is the letter which I have received from the late firm of Chipps, Rice, Hiccorry, and Co., giving a statement of their failure, with a schedule of their debts and credits, and the painful result; which, as I said before, will produce a pice in the pound, or something of that sort; but which benefit, according to the terms upon which my friend here left his property in the business, will not accrue to him, inasmuch as, on the contrary, it forms part of the assets which are to secure that advantage to others."

"Dear me, dear me," said Cuthbert, and natural tears flowed down his furrowed cheek; "how thoughtless—ah—that's it—I left it all to Hiccorry—he did as he liked."

"But, my dear Mr. Gurney," said Mrs. Brandyball, "why should you distress yourself by telling the story; is it likely that such an event should have occurred and you not *have* been the first person made acquainted with it?"

"Ah—that's true," said Cuthbert; "eh, Nubley?"

"*Silly creature*," thought my friend;—"that's easily accounted for," said he; "I obtained the first intelligence, because, as I told you, the letter which encloses one to you, was sent to my agents by Hiccorry, who, not knowing where you were in England, Wales, Scotland, or Ireland, begs me to forward it forthwith—~~and~~ here it is."

Saying which, he produced a packet directed to Cuthbert, the size and appearance of which produced a slight convulsive shudder on his emaciated frame.

"Eh dear! dear!" said my poor brother—"I can't read it—if what you say is true—it's no matter what I read. Here, Kate—open it—read it for me."

"I'll do it, my love," said Brandyball, taking the despatch from the hand of her "darling child."

"*Read it yourself*. Cuthbert," muttered Nubley—"to trust affairs of such importance—to—eh?"

"I have perfect confidence," said Cuthbert—"I have no secrets—read—read it out."

Mrs. Brandyball, who, after all, was not much of a dab at

reading manuscripts off-hand, and who soon became bewildered in a maze of mohurs, rupees (arcot and sicca), pagodas, pice, fanams, and cowries, went through her work as steadily as could be expected, until she had finished the last paragraph, which referring to the "State, Schedule, and Account Current," brought to her conviction the full and entire truth of every word that Nubley had said, and corroborated the fact that the amiable Cuthbert, instead of a creditor of the estate, had been converted into a responsible part of the firm, where he had since his departure figured as the "Co." which was added to their "style" as soon as he had set sail from Saugar.

"It's all true enough," said Mrs. Brandyball. "Poor, dear Mr. Gurney!"

"Yes, yes," said Cuthbert, throwing himself back on his sofa—"true—but," added he, lifting himself gently up, assisted by Kate, who raised his head, "Providence is always good—this is a sad blow—but—it—has kindly afforded me consolation—eh dear! eh dear!"

"How?" said Nubley.

"In these dear kind creatures near me," said Cuthbert, half-sobbing—"they will take care of me—soothe me—ah!—I ought to be very grateful."

"*Poor old buffer*!" thought Nubley; "umph!"

"I have nobody to look to but them."

Nubley, with all his eccentricities, was a quick observer, and the expression of Mrs. Brandyball's countenance during the delivery of Cuthbert's last bit of "recitative" was not lost upon him.

"No, Mr. Gurney," said the lady, when he had concluded, "Providence has raised you more and better friends than *me*, to whom the cherishing and solacing you under affliction will be equally a duty and a pleasure. Kindly as you think of me, I am not vain enough to suppose that my claims upon your affection can be superior to theirs."

"They are," said Cuthbert; "I have told you so; I am pledged to you—and your own words, spoke to me a quarter of an hour ago—eh! dear me!—they convince me—that—my opinion of your regard for me is not misplaced."

"No," said Kate, who was, for some reasons best known

to themselves, up to this period certainly attached to Mrs. Brandyball, and was too young to appreciate the sudden change in that lady's feelings, consequent upon the alteration of my brother's circumstances—"no, dear pappy, that they are not; we will work for you, and do whatever we can for you."

"It would be rather difficult, Miss Kate," said Mrs. Brandyball, "to ascertain the manner in which, with your idleness of disposition and flightiness of character, you could contribute to the support of your father-in-law. However, we had better leave Mr. Nublely and Mr. Gurney together—they have really serious business to discuss—matters with which of course we can have nothing to do."

"Idleness and flightiness!" said Kate, colouring crimson—"who made me idle?—who taught me to be flighty?—if I am flighty and idle."

"Come, Miss Falwasser," replied Brandyball, warming, "don't answer *me*—I will suffer no pertness so long as *you* continue under my roof."

"*Your* roof!" exclaimed Kitty; "I'm sure pappy——"

"Be silent, miss!" interrupted the lady; "leave the room this moment."

"I sha'n't, ma'am," answered the irritated girl.

"Oh, my dear child," said the placid, good-natured Cuthbert, "don't speak in that way to Mrs. Brandyball—if you love me, dear, never treat her with disrespect."

"I want none of her respect," said the lady; "I merely want decency of behaviour. And so long as you both stay here, I will take care not to be spoken sharply to, by a pert, forward chit like Miss Kitty." Saying which the irate lady bounced out of the room.

"Go after her, Kate," said Cuthbert—"go, there's a dear."

"I'll leave the room, pappy," said Kate, "because I will do all I can that you bid me—but I will not go near her." And with these words, illustrated by a flood of tears, Kate, anxious to conceal her agitation, rushed out of the apartment. Whereupon Nublely, taking up the skirts of his coat, danced grotesquely round the room, to his own singing of an old country dance. Cuthbert opened his eyes to their

full extent, and evidently thought him mad, and expressed as much in his astonished countenance.

"That's it—that's it!" cried Nubley.

"What?" asked Cuthbert.

"*I shan't tell him yet,*" thought he. "Oh, nothing—nothing—only something—he's as blind as a bat—never mind." Saying which, and being nearly breathless with his eccentric exertions, he threw himself into his chair, and completed the astonishment of his friend by wishing him joy of the news from India.

"Joy!" said Cuthbert.

"Yes, joy," repeated Nubley: "out of evil comes good. You are as innocent as a baby; this misfortune will prove your friends—eh, don't you see? *Not he.*"

Nor did he. The brief experience which Nubley had already of Mrs. Brandyball's conduct during the ten minutes subsequent to her conviction that the history of Cuthbert's ruin was true, satisfied him of results for which Cuthbert himself was in no degree prepared, and Nubley's sense of perception, so oddly disguised by the absence of his mind, and, in fact, its wanderings whenever its energies were not applied to any particular point, led him to conclusions of a more satisfactory nature than I anticipated, even after having read his first much-wished-for letter descriptive of his proceedings as far as they had gone.

The dialogue between Nubley and my brother, to the enjoyment of which they had been left by the retirement of Mrs. Brandyball, continued for upwards of an hour, during which period Nubley, letting out as few of his private thoughts and secret opinions as possible, confined himself to an examination and comparison of the accounts of the "departed" firm of Chipps, Rice, Hiccory, and Co., and, in order to further the views which he thought most advantageous for Cuthbert, to a representation in the strongest terms of the irremediable wreck of his fortunes. Cuthbert bore this exhibition of melancholy facts with patience, and even firmness, till feeling exhausted, and, as Nubley thought, anxious about the fair partner of his future existence, who was destined to soothe and cheer him under the change of circumstances—for to this straw the drowning bankrupt still

clung—he begged Nubley to ring the bell, a favour which he asked oftener in the course of the day than any other, and from the soliciting which he might have been entirely relieved by the ordinary addition of a yard or two of line to the bell-rope. Nubley obeyed his orders, or rather fulfilled his request.

“Twice—pull twice,” said Cuthbert, “if it is not too much trouble.” Nubley again did as he was bid, and again Hutton, the faithful genius of the “ring,” stood before his master.

“Is my little basin of soup ready, Hutton?” said Cuthbert.

“No, sir, I believe not,” said Hutton.

“It is near one—eh?” asked my brother.

“Past one a good deal, sir” said Hutton.

“Why,” said Cuthbert, “that’s very odd—eh dear!—I am such a creature of habit—eh? It is a little mess that Mrs. Brandyball always makes for me herself,” murmured he to Nubley: “she never fails;—does she know what o’clock it is? She’s as punctual—eh, dear!—ask her—give my love, and ask her.”

“Mrs. Brandyball is out, sir,” said Hutton: “she went out about an hour ago.”

“Is Miss Kate with her?” said Cuthbert.

“No, sir,” replied the servant: “Miss Falwasser, I believe, is in her room.”

“*Bravo that’s it!*” thought Nubley, louder than usual.

“Ask her to come here—eh dear, eh dear!” said Cuthbert. “Why, were can that good woman be gone? I dare say to try and be of some service. They are all so kind—eh?—and that——”

“I dare say she has,” said Nubley; “*fudge*” (thought).

“Eh, what?” said my brother.

“I dare say she has,” replied Nubley; “but I hope she will be discreet—because, don’t you see? The news of a fall like this may do mischief—hurry in bills—eh?—*I wonder if he owes much here.*”

“Owes!” answered Cuthbert, believing the question actually addressed to him; “I owe a good deal in little matters; but I hope—eh, dear, some arrangement may be made for this dear good woman. The outlay has been, you know, for our joint comfort, and—some allowance—eh dear

—it is very shocking ; I wish I were well enough to be more affected by it ; but—she—she will manage all—she manages everything, she has such a head.”

“ Yes,” said Nubley, looking at Cuthbert’s frisky wig, “ and so have you ; but, you’ll excuse me, I doubt the success of her plans——”

At this moment Kitty returned to the room, bearing in her hand, on its accustomed little salver, the desiderated (I like the word, it is so long and so new) basin of broth.

“ Ha !” said Cuthbert, “ thanks, dear. What, did Mrs. B. tell you to bring it me before in her absence, and you forgot it ?”

“ No, pappy,” said Kate ; “ she told me nothing about it, for I have not seen her since she left you : if she had, I should not have forgotten the time. *She* forgot it herself.”

Saying which, she drew the little table to the sofa’s side, and placed upon it the wonted, and in the present case much “ wanted” *potage*, till now ever tendered to him by the hand of Brandyball herself. Hereabouts Nubley, who never doubted as to the ulterior results of the explosion which he foresaw, began to calculate as to the origin and cause of Kate’s present affectionate conduct to her father-in-law. His thoughts upon the point lay so deep in his mind, that they did not bubble up into expression ; he looked at her, and thought she had never seemed so nice or so pretty before. The question with him was whether her kindness more strongly evinced itself in proportion to the defection of her valued preceptress, or that she made an exhibition of that kindness in order, if (as she was quite quick enough to think possible) Brandyball should abandon “ pappy” in his poverty, she might secure a home and comfort with those who were more likely to take care of him. Nubley weighed all this ; and, as a jury are always directed to lean to mercy, at the conclusion of his consideration he felt more favourably towards the attendant sylph than usual. Pending the operation of these doubts, Hutton made his appearance with two letters for Cuthbert, folded longwise, and which bore no external evidence of being *billet-doux*.

“ What are these ?” said Cuthbert. “ Eh ?—dear me—two more letters ! Kitty, dear, open them for me.”

"The persons who brought them wait for answers, sir," said Hutton.

"Let them wait a little," said Cuthbert. "Go and tell them to stop."

Hutton bowed and retired.

When he was gone, Kate, according to order, broke the seal of the first, and read—

"Bath ——— 24 — 18

"Sir,—Having a large bill due to-morrow, we should feel very much obliged by your favouring us with a cheque for the amount of the little account enclosed.

"We are, sir, your obedient servants,

"BRIGHT and TWIZZLE."

"Oh!" said Cuthbert. "Ah! I know—a small affair I desired dear Mrs. Brandyball to order a few things—trinkets; read—is the bill there, Kate?"

"Yes, pappy," said Kate.

"Read it, love," said Cuthbert.

She did read it.

Bath, 18—

CUTHBERT GURNEY, Esq., Dr. to BRIGHT and TWIZZLE.

		£	s.	d.
14th.	One pair of drop brilliant ear-rings	84	16	0
	One pair bracelets, blue enamel, centre diamonds, with pearls, clasp with emeralds, as per order	168	14	0
15th.	Gold watch, double case, diamonded in seven holes, repeating, seconds, &c. &c.	73	10	0
	Massive gold neck chain for ditto, at 20 <i>l.</i> per yard —two yards and a half	50	0	0
	Hoop diamond ring, fine brilliants	63	0	0
17th	Pearl necklace ear-rings and bracelets, superb set, gold snaps, with diamonds, complete	575	0	0
	Amethyst brooch, set with large diamonds	260	0	0
	One gold toothpick	0	18	6
		<hr/>		
		£1275	18	6

"Dear me," said Cuthbert, "that is a great deal. I—I—recollect buying the gold toothpick—eh—and saying, I thought dear Mrs. Brandyball would like a watch and chain, which I gave her; but—eh!—this is very surprising!"

"Not to *me*," said Nubley. "Now, Miss Kitty, let's have the other."

"Oh," said Kate, unfolding a memorandum of most ex-

ceeding length, "this is the upholsterer's bill, for the furniture and things."

"Ah!" said Nubley, "never mind reading it all through. What is the sum total?"

"What, at the bottom?" said Kate.

"Yes," said Nubley.

"The sum total," stammered Kitty: "it is one, and nine, and eight, and a four, and then there is a fifteen and a six."

"What!" cried Nubley, "can't you count, Miss? Have you been at school I don't know how many years, and can do no more than that? Here, let me see—here—yes—sure enough, Cuthbert, here is a bill for furniture. One thousand nine hundred and eighty-four pounds, fifteen shillings and sixpence—what say you to *that*?"

"I dare say," said Cuthbert, "it is all correct—the furniture was wanted—eh, dear!—but where is Mrs. Brandyball herself—she will set this all to rights—eh? What makes the people send just to day—eh?"

"I think I could guess," said Nubley—"eh! *so would anybody in the world except yourself.*"

"As for Mrs. Brandyball," said Kate, nearly trembling with rage against her darling governess, "she is gone into town, I know, and if she never comes back I don't care."

"Oh dear, dear Kate!" said Cuthbert, "don't talk in that way about a person with whom you will soon be so nearly connected."

"Shall I?" said Kate, who knew more of the world by half than her respectable father-in-law at four times her age, "I'm not so sure of *that*."

"Dear, dear," said Cuthbert, "what do you mean?—why—eh—what does it all mean?"

"Why," said Nubley, "it means that you *were* rich, you are now found out to be poor; fair-weather birds all fly away in the storm."

"Yes, Mr. Nubley," said Mrs. Brandyball entering the room with all the impassioned dignity of a tragedy queen; "but no birds are to be caught with chaff, at least if they have any instinct, or are not very young indeed."

Cuthbert's astonishment at the appearance and aspect of his intended, was something perfectly indescribable.

"Yes, sir," continued the lady, addressing her astounded victim, "you—*you*, sir, have induced me, under false pretences, to give up my school, to throw myself out of a good livelihood, and now you turn out to be a bankrupt. How can you justify yourself?"

"My dear Mrs. B.," said Cuthbert, "I was up to this morning as innocent of the fact—eh, dear!—eh, dear!—as yourself, and——"

"Innocent!" said the lady, with a sneer worthy of a comic actress of the first water, "yes, innocent enough, Heaven knows; but you must have known what was going to happen to you."

"Not I," said Cuthbert: "I trusted to friends, and have been deceived."

"More fool you!" almost screamed the gorgon. "But what am *I* to do? how am *I* to be satisfied?"

"Your kind affection for me——" said Cuthbert.

"Affection for what?" cried the sweet instructress of young females: "affection for *you*! What upon earth could make anybody care about a shrivelled piece of parchment in calico pantaloons like you, except——"

"What!" said Cuthbert. "What do I hear?"

"Why, I tell you what you hear," continued the virago; "you have induced me to break up my establishment—my seminary—my Montpelier. I have sent away my young ladies; I have relied upon you, and see what has happened."

"Surely," said Cuthbert, raising himself somewhat energetically on his elbow, "surely this must be—eh—this—is—eh, what?"

"What?" cried the lady; "why, I tell you what—it is this: you have suffered yourself to be fooled out of your property, and I have suffered myself to be fooled out of my business; my girls are gone, and I gave up a fine connexion to become your wife."

"And," said Cuthbert, still clinging to the hope that she really did love him, 'for himself alone,' "and I am still ready to fulfil the engagement."

"*Tom Noddy*," thought Nubley.

"Are you?" said the lady. "Thank you for nothing. I am not likely to throw myself away upon an old bankrupt."

"Oh Mrs. Brandyball!" said Kitty, in a tone which delighted Nubley, who entertained a sanguine expectation that the exposure of the roundabout governess's real character would work well in bringing the truant heart of the elder Falwasser back to its natural, or, at least, its most congenial home."

"Oh!" cried the infuriated woman, "I don't know what you mean by oh! miss. *My* belief is, that you care about as much for your 'pappy,' as you call him, as I do. You loved him for what you thought you could get, and I—but no matter, I must be paid, and that directly—I say, directly, sir," looking at Nubley, "for all that is due for the board and education of the girls."

To attempt a description of Cuthbert's countenance, or the agitation of his frame, while the great lady in the little parlour was fulminating all these her denunciations, would be impossible; he turned deadly pale, his limbs quivered, and he sank back like a corpse against the back of the sofa.

Kitty rushed out of the room, and, in less than a minute, returned with Hutton and some water. Nubley rose from his seat, and lifted poor Cuthbert up.

"It's all very fine, fainting," said Mrs. Brandyball, "but tricks upon travellers won't do. I have been imposed upon, ruined, destroyed."

"Hold your tongue, ma'am," said Nubley.

"I shall do no such thing, sir," screamed his female antagonist. "This is *my* house, and I shall do as I please in it."

"I am very glad, ma'am," said Nubley, "to find that it is your house, because in that case my poor friend here is not responsible for any portion of either rent or furniture."

"I don't mean *that*, sir," exclaimed the lady, while Hutton was endeavouring to restore poor Cuthbert to a sense of his situation. "He *is* responsible."

"Ah!" said Nubley, "so you say, ma'am."

"Say?" screamed she; "I not only say, but know. Who

is to pay the bills which have been just brought in, besides others that I expect?—Who is to pay the upholsterer's bill—the jeweller's bill—the——”

“You, ma'am,” said Nubley:—“*that's a settler*—eh! don't you see?—if—and see what a virtue there is in an if—if you, out of pure love and affection for my respected bit of parchment in calico pantaloons, had married him, he, poor dear body, would have been in for it: but no, there is no responsibility, ma'am; he admits eighteen shillings and sixpence for a toothpick, for which, in his name, I will pay; but as for the rest, that's your own affair, and you may go and whistle for it, old lady.”

“Old what, sir?” said Mrs. Brandyball.

Old devil—thought Nubley.

“You are extremely civil, sir,” said she; “but that won't do.”

“Yes, it will,” said Nubley. “If you will show me any authority from Cuthbert to you to use his name and obtain credit at these shops, then I will not deny his liability; but, if not——”

“Mr. Gurney,” said the lady to my recovering brother, “do you not recollect the jeweller's bill?—did you not get credit there—eh?”

“Yes,” said Cuthbert—eh!—dear yes—I own that eighteen shillings—eh, dear! and sixpence, for a toothpick; but——”

“A what!” cried the lady, “Do you mean to say——”

“I mean to say, ma'am,” said Nubley, “that *my* friend here is not answerable for any extravagant bills of yours.”

“Then, sir,” said the lady walking up to Nubley, in a kind of Amazonian march, “who is to pay them?”

“You, ma'am, if you please,” answered Nubley, by no means intimidated with her manner of approach; “Mr. Gurney shall pay you every farthing due to you for the education of the girls, and whatever you choose to charge for board and lodging, but——”

“Board and lodging, you vulgar monster!” cried the lady, “do I keep a boarding-house—a lodging-house?”

“Yes,” said Nubley, “both—and something worse for all I know—only don't be saucy. Now, I'll tell you—you

thought you had duped and deluded this poor friend of mine—a piece of parchment in calico, eh? into marrying you; and if it hadn't pleased Providence to ruin him beforehand, then you'd have had him now; when he gets out of his fainting fit he'll find exactly the sort of wife he would have had, and appreciate your affection for him and his children."

"Affection!" said the lady; "who talks about affection? Children! I am sure I shall be too glad to get rid of Miss Kitty when I am paid my bill; but what am I to do about the others?"

"*Tol der ol lol!*" thought Nubley; "*who cares? Cuthbert my friend, how d'ye feel?*"

"Dying," said Cuthbert; "I could not have fancied—ch!—anything so hard-hearted—so cruel!"

"What d'ye mean by cruel, sir?" said Mrs. Brandyball. "Who is the deceiver? what did you tell me? what did you offer me?—settlements—money—jewels!"

"Show us the writings, mistress," said Nubley. "He hasn't been fool—that is, I mean good-natured—enough, to put pen to paper beyond a cheque or so, eh?—no, no, old lady."

"Old!" screamed the governess.

"Elderly," said Nubley.

"Elderly," screamed she, still louder.

"Chickabiddy, if you like, ma'am," said Nubley. "All mean to say is, that if you will make out your bill, ma'am—whatever it is, ma'am—I'll pay that, and take my friend away, ma'am. As to the bills which you thought proper to run up upon the chance of marrying him—those, ma'am, you'll pay yourself—Hutton."

"Yes, sir," said Hutton.

"Send down into Bath, and order horses to be ready at two."

"What does it all mean?" said Cuthbert. "Dear Mrs. Brandyball—I thought I knew your heart—I am sure—eh dear!—this is a mistake—eh!—you will not give me up?—eh dear!—misfortune is—eh!"

"Give you up!" exclaimed the lady; "Sippets give up what?"

"*Parchment in calico,*" thought Nubley.

"That's it," said she, "give up——"

"And Kate," said Cuthbert, throwing a pair of eyes grown into gooseberries pathetically at the girl, "Kate, eh?"

"The sooner we part the better," said Mrs. Brandyball; "I know quite enough of *her*—and I don't think I am likely, after all the trouble I have had with her, to keep her for nothing. You had better bundle *her* back to Bengal."

"Brute!" said Kitty, and rushed out of the room.

"*It's all right*," thought Nubley. "And now ma'am if you will just tot up your account for schooling and *that*, I'll arrange the whole matter. I don't think it would be pleasant for my friend to stay here any longer; and his circumstances will not allow him, as you know, to support his present mode of living."

"I never make out accounts," said the lady, "especially for persons situated as I have been relatively with the poor old man. I only want to know if you will pay the tradesmen's bills, which I have incurred in expectation of the union of your friend with myself?"

"Not one penny, ma'am," said Nubley.

"What, not the jeweller's?"

"No; not a farthing, ma'am," said Nubley, "beyond the eighteen shillings and sixpence for the toothpick, which he admits."

"Toothpick!" said the lady, with a sneer, evidently intended to convey an expression of contempt derogatory to poor Cuthbert's "ivory."

"A greater scamp I never heard of," said Mrs. Brandyball; "but I'll hunt him—pursue him—I'll have the money."

"No, you won't," said Nubley; "you are luckily found out, ma'am; and if my friend is ruined to a certain extent, he is saved from a much worse ruin which was in store for him."

At this moment Kate returned, having been evidently crying. She was dressed for a start—bonnet, shawl, &c.

"Oh, Miss Pert, you are come!" said Mrs. Brandyball; "much good you'll come to, *my dear* (with a sneer). And where are you going to?—to the linen-draper's prentice, or the dancing-master?"

"I'm going," said Kate, bursting into a flood of tears, "with my poor dear father-in-law, wherever he goes."

"Affectionate love!" said Mrs. Brandyball; "going with pappy?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Kate, "to the world's end with him; and if it hadn't been for what I learned under your roof, I never should have deserved the insults you have cast upon me."

"Fine girl!" said Mrs. Brandyball; "a very fit daughter for a bankrupt impostor."

"Ma'am," said Nubley, "we are rather pressed for time; will you make out your bill, and we——"

"There's no bill," said Cuthbert, recovering from his trance, and seeming really to awaken to a "sense of his condition;" "Mrs. B. has had five hundred pounds last week."

"Oh!" said Nubley; "tol der lol lol! Five hundred pounds!—that's a settler—we want no bills. Hutton, pack up—pack up—make haste, we are going."

"Yes," said the lady, "but the bills I have incurred——"

"I tell you again, you must pay them," said Nubley.

"No, no," said Cuthbert; "let me do what is right—I would rather—eh, dear!"

"Rather!" said Nubley; "you are a bankrupt—you can do nothing—no!—old parchment in calico! I'll take you out of *this*; and whenever you find it convenient to settle those accounts of the jeweller, upholsterer, and other similar sort of people——"

"Yes, sir," said Mrs. Brandyball, attentively, and with a degree of mingled interest and civility.

"——Recollect, ma'am, the old proverb about the slip between the cup and the lip: but don't trouble Gurney; you have got the goods—you will have to pay for them. And so now, Hutton, how do we get on?"

"The carriage is at the door," said Hutton, to whom, in point of fact, Nubley, upon his first arrival, had given instructions to get horses ready, the appropriate appearance of which startled poor Cuthbert, and made Kitty as happy as possible.

"So," said the lady, "you are going, are you?"

Nobody answered; but all proceeded in their different modes of preparing for a departure.

There are several ways in which rage, disappointment, vengeance, jealousy, despair, &c. &c. &c., may be exhibited. The great heart of the combustible Brandyball was not to be trifled with: with her it must be all or nothing; either the explosion would be something that nobody could withstand, or all the elements of confusion must be hidden under a bushel. She saw that she had overreached herself; a few days more would have united her to Cutlibert, and, bankrupt or not, all her expensive bills, run up, not upon his personal responsibility, but upon the contingency of his marriage, would have fallen upon him, and by so much the more have decreased the dividend on his estate: but this was not destined to be—she was quite lawyer enough to know that. The failure of her great object beat her down; and the very recollection of the fawning, flattering devotion, she had paid to the poor invalid whom she, in the plenitude of her rage, had now denounced, drove her to the conclusion that her best course would be to treat the parting trio with what she considered contempt; and therefore, when the carriage was announced packed and ready, she struck her forehead with her hand, and ran out of the library upstairs into her own room, where she threw herself upon her bed, much to the peril of the legs and feet of the bedstead, and burst into tears; not, however, quitting the “presence” of her evanescent guests without ejaculating something which, as no lady ought ever to enunciate it, so no lady should be exposed to the pain of finding it recorded.

All this, and other proceedings of minor importance, but which in their details satisfied me that Nubley had acted in the most correct and even liberal manner toward the dependents of the household, and, indeed, had behaved, as I had dreamed of him, most *angelically* (and never, never, so long as I live, will I take a prejudice against any man when I first see him) I learned from himself, dear old fellow! And who can describe—I am sure I cannot—not the delight only, but the surprise—the joy, I may truly say—when, upon the evening of that day which I had resolved should be the last of suspense, we were roused from a somewhat

heavy evening's *cause* after our tea by the usual dog-barking, bell-ringing, gravel-grinding noise which unquestionably announced an arrival. It could be nobody but Nubley. I sprang from my chair; Mrs. Nubley cried "Lauk!" and Harriet begged me not to flurry myself. However it was a burst of feeling, and nothing could stop me. I rushed into the hall, and, oh! how—in what words, by what means—can I express the blessedness of my feelings, the extent of my happiness, when I saw my beloved brother Cuthbert, ruined as he was—beggared by his own improvidence—but dearer to me than ever—lifted almost from the carriage into the house? The frailty of its tenure to me at that moment was nothing; I caught him to my heart and burst into tears: *I did*—and I am not ashamed to write it down. My position was altered—I felt proud and happy—it was now for *me* to show how I could succour and support my nearest relation upon earth. It was all a mystery what had happened; Cuthbert leant on my arm—he pressed it—not a word was spoken—I understood nothing of what I saw but my whole soul was engrossed by the possession of my brother, who, it seemed clear to me, had been rescued from the Brandyball. I shook Nubley's hand, and felt encouraged by his emphatic squeeze of mine. Kate I had not then seen, but what my sensations were may be guessed when I placed my half-fainting brother on his accustomed sofa, and saw Kitty, the object of my aversion, run to Harriet, throw herself upon her knees, and, bursting into tears exclaim—"Forgive me!—all, all here forgive me, I am not what I was." Without then knowing what had happened beyond the fact that we were all ruined financially, I believe that was the happiest moment of my life. In setting down these matters I have anticipated, as it were, the results which brought about this

"Consummation devoutly to be wished;"

but the sequel is beautiful, as showing that which the "evil eye" of the censorious seldom sees, or chooses to see. It was perfectly true that Cuthbert, by his extraordinary carelessness and inanition, had permitted himself to be ruined; but that human pineapple, Nubley, whose rough and re-

pulsive coat covered a heart full of the richness of liberality, did not allow the evening to pass without making me understand that as his fate and fortunes had been linked with Cuthbert's through life, and that he had no existing relation that he knew of, and that his failure should never affect him. It is true that Nubley deplored the want of a family in terms which, whether eloquently or cogitatively expressed, there seems no necessity for repeating, the only remark upon which, I make in the words of his excellent lady, who, at the close of his lamentations, screamed out as usual—

“Lauk, Mr. Nubley, you are such a man !”

But the second or third day after this happy return of our absent friends, I had another opportunity of beholding human nature in a delightful point of view ; and what a blessing it is to be able to put upon record traits calculated to vindicate our common fallibility against the sweeping censure of the satirest and cynic.

Kate's experience of Mrs. Brandyball's conduct and treatment of her “dear girls,” had made her an altered person, as she herself professed. Although but a few days older than when she left us, she had gained years in the power of appreciating the real character of that fiend, as I have already said, not in human shape. High spirited and warm tempered, the moment she saw the sudden change in her conduct towards Cuthbert, ten thousand “trifles light as air” flashed into her mind, which convinced her that she had been playing *that* game ever since her return, and that the game she had been playing before his arrival had been even worse ; in fact, she was now old enough to know that a more artful, designing, dangerous woman never lived than her once “dear governess ;” to which conclusion she very shortly led Harriet, who, to say truth, did not require much urging, especially after what our dear little Jenny had told us, to believe that Montpelier was an establishment which most especially demanded an extraneous *surveillance*. I do not like to put upon paper all I have heard, but, in spite of the brick walls and the “broken bottles,” I have a notion that Montpelier, however good for the bodily health of the “dear little angels,” was by no means advantageous as regarded their moral or spiritual state.

Well! there is nothing at which one ought to start; but—and I say *but* with an emphasis—I declare and protest that when I saw Kitty—without any further professions, a beautiful girl—no left shoulder stuck out of her frock, and at least another inch of tucker in front of it—totally changed in manner, fond of her sister, affectionate to Cutlibert without pretension, and endeavouring by every means to gain Harriet's good opinion, my feelings toward her took an entirely new turn; and all at once I thought how painful it would be (for the whole history of our remaining at Blissford was problematical) for this girl, growing into womanhood, to be domesticated close to Kittington, the dancing-master, to whom she had made such extraordinary advances.

Extraordinary, indeed—but much more extraordinary was what followed. Our new arrivals had not been landed a week—during which the dear Nubley—except what I could catch from his involuntary “oozings,” had given me no kind of idea to what extent his munificence would go—when Mr. Kittington's name was brought up to me. He wished to speak to me. Having the respect for him which his highly honourable conduct upon a former occasion had created, I, without a moment's delay, went down to him in my morning-gown. I found him in deep mourning; he appeared considerably agitated; I saw his embarrassment, and paused to give him time to “collect his scattered thoughts;” still he hesitated, and again I bowed.

“Mr. Gurney,” said he, at length, “you remember that I once paid you a visit here—of an unprofessional nature—I—”

The moment he got this length I satisfied myself that Miss Kitty, in spite of appearances, had been making a second attack upon my worthy companion.

“It is with reference to that circumstance,” said my visiter, “that I am again here.”

“What!” said I, “has the young lady again——”

“Oh no,” interrupted Mr. Kittington, “circumstances are so altered, short as is the time that has elapsed since the event to which you refer, that I stand before you in a totally different position.” Hereabouts he seemed to gain new courage, and stand erect, and look steadily. “I believe.”

continued he, "I told you that my father was a man of high honour and respectability, although unfortunate. My mother, a lady by birth, who, excellent as her husband was, had disobliged her family by marrying him, has been for years estranged from her relations. I now have to state to you, Mr. Gurney, that her brother, my uncle, General Harlingham, relenting on his death-bed of an unjustifiable harshness against his exemplary sister, has left me heir to all his property, real and personal, amounting to something more than seven thousand pounds per annum, on condition of my assuming his name."

"I assure you," said I, "I most sincerely congratulate you. The little I had the pleasure of seeing of your family gave me so favourable an impression of your character and qualities, that I am most happy to hear of your well-merited acquisition. I presume we shall lose you as a neighbour."

The moment I had uttered these words, I perceived his agitation return, his cheek flushed and turned pale, and his whole manner betrayed an emotion to me inexplicable.

"Mr. Gurney," said he, "I confess this is one of the most trying moments of my life. I am but young. I trust and hope the reverse of fortune which has befallen me will not induce me to commit myself. If it does, I think in your hands my character is safe. I would give the world that you could anticipate what I am about to express."

"I have no notion," said I; "but, whatever it is, rely upon my most anxious desire to hear it."

"Miss Falwasser," said Kittington, or rather Harlingham—"Miss Falwasser——" and then he paused.

"Oh!" said I, "you must banish all that from your mind; your conduct was so honourable—and the affair will be forgotten—and——"

"I hope not," said Harlingham, as I must now call him. "I felt it my duty in my *then* position to do what I did: as a professional man, I could do nothing else; but I have never been happy since. And now, Mr. Gurney," added he, with tears in his eyes, tears of which no man of high and honourable feeling need be ashamed; "now, I will go farther upon that point than I did before—not to make you appreciate more highly the sacrifice I then made, but to in-

duce you to listen to my present proposal. I admit that my admiration of the young lady in question was even then fervent and sincere, and that, although the stern sense of moral obligation connected with the business I then followed, led me to betray a confidence which I had no right to encourage, I now request, as a gentleman and a man of fortune, permission to be received into your family as a suitor for the affections of Miss Katharine Falwasser."

I looked at him for a moment, and, having held out my hand to him, and pressed *his*, when I recovered, said,

"If you had one fortnight since made this proposal—honourable, noble as it is on your part—I should have said, 'No. Whatever my brother may say—I will not hear of it;' but Kate Falwasser, misled, and spoiled by the horrid woman to whose care she had been incautiously consigned, has, since circumstances have occurred to try the real qualities of her heart, evinced so much good feeling and so much indignation at the conduct of her late preceptress, that I think I may, with perfect fairness to *you*, admit you to that intimacy with our family circle which you desire."

"I know," said Harlingham, "to what you allude; in a small society like Blissford, family matters are no secrets, and I hope you will not think worse of me because it was when I found that, in all probability, from the rumours that were rife, Miss Falwasser would be portionless, I ventured to make my present offer."

There are of course some very extraordinary men to be found now and then, but this Kittington, or Harlingham, seemed to me a Phoenix. With his taste I had no disposition to quarrel, but all other feelings were absorbed in those of admiration at his honest and virtuous forbearance, evidently in opposition to the bent of his inclination in the first instance, and in his delicate anxiety to repair what he considered the violence he had done to Kate by exposing her amatory epistle.

The result of this interview was his admission into our circle, together with his mother and sister, and his consequent association with Kitty; whose manners were so changed, and whose recollection of her former advances to her now permitted lover, were so strongly impressed on her

mind, that she could scarcely lift her eyes to meet his ; indeed, so diffident did she appear in his presence, that Fanny Wells, some six or seven years her senior, began to think that she was not half sympathetic enough, and that Mr. Harlingham would be much happier with a wife a few years older. Wherein Fanny most probably was right ; but that was no affair of mine, and Cuthbert, who had abandoned his wig, and seemed reconciled to his present state of misfortune, was well pleased to see Kitty pleased, and to see that everybody was pleased with Kitty.

It was but a short time after this interview, and during the agreeable intercourse between the families, that Nublely opened his whole generous intentions to *me*. He again reverted to his want of family, and the silliness of his wife, and then informed me that, under all the circumstances, and having no relations who had any claims upon him, he would, pending the investigation of the complicated affair of Chipps, Rice, Hiccorry, and Co., put Cuthbert entirely at his ease ; “to do which,” added the good old man, “he must be put in the position to put you at your ease, too. This gave me the highest opinion of Nublely’s generosity at the moment : what, then, were my feelings when I saw him, as usual, stubble his chin before the chimney-glass, and think out—*“and every shilling I have shall be yours when I die.”*

This “oozing” placed me in an extremely awkward position : that I had heard the words, and was consequently aware of his intentions, is most true ; but I felt it necessary to make my gratitude subservient to my civility, and therefore could not venture to admit that he had given utterance to thoughts which he had not meant to express.

I certainly communicated to Harriet what had fallen upon my ears ; and the involuntary expression was completely corroborated, as she told me, by the avowals of Mrs. Nublely, who declared, “Lauk, he was sich a man when once he took a thing into his head,” &c. &c.

We had gone on for some fortnight in this way, Cuthbert apparently unconscious of what was the state of the case, but, nevertheless, anxiously fidgety about Mrs. Brandyball, whose rage and disappointment at the frustration of her

hopes were most awful. She wrote him one letter, which we, Nubley and I, under the circumstances of his health, felt ourselves justified in opening and answering: it was coarse, insolent, unfeeling, and even while attempting to threaten him into some pecuniary sacrifice, admitted her only object in her intended marriage to have been securing his money; but what was worse than all, it contained some anecdotes of Kitty, and allusions to her conduct while under her care, which, if any care had been taken of her, could never have occurred.

Nubley wrote her an answer; and when we saw in the Saturday week's newspaper, quoted from the "Gazette" List of Bankrupts,—“Sarah Brandyball, boarding-house-keeper, Montpelier, Bath, co. Somerset, to surrender at the Lamb Inn, Bath, Thursday, February 14, at ten; Attorneys, Messrs. Grab and Worry, Gay-street;” we did not feel more pity than could be afforded to a mass of unprincipled humanity, whose whole efforts, under the cloak of kindness, refinement, and sentimentality, were to undermine and pervert the principles of the unfortunate victims, for the instruction and edification of whom she had neither means nor inclination.

Well, and here am I, come to the end of another notebook; and here, therefore, must I stop; but, happy as I am in the restoration of my brother, and his affection to me—delighted as I am to find Kate redeemed, and, as I hope, in a fair way to happiness—pleased as I am to find Jane all that I ever hoped her to be, my wife faultless, and my family circle most agreeable; Sniggs our own again, the Wellses the best-natured and kindest, and the Nubleys all we could desire; still I feel some apprehension that I *may* be for a time unsettled. Nubley lets out that I might do a great deal of good by going to Calcutta—that he is too old himself to undertake the voyage, and that Cuthbert's removal would be annihilation: so I even now hold myself in readiness.

I received in the morning of to-day, the last I can record, a most extraordinary letter from Daly, who has married his “fortune,” and is most zealous in his calling. Hull has also written to me, not choosing to travel back this road

with his aunt, and tells me that matters will turn out better than we think with Chipps, Rice, Hiccory, and Co., as he "happens to know:" and the newspaper announces the death at sea of "Millicent, wife of Lieutenant Merman, of the 146th foot."

What a prospect opens as my book closes! all I can say is, that I am thankful to Providence for the successes which have arisen to me out of evil, and for that mercy and goodness which it extends even to the least worthy of human beings.

P.S. I see by the "Sun" of to-night, that Captain Thompson, *alias* Jemmy Dabbs, *alias* Bluff Jim, was last Tuesday sentenced to fourteen years' transportation for horse-stealing, having been apprehended, committed, tried, and condemned in the short space of twenty-eight hours.

THE END.

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